

**An investigation of factors contributing to  
dropping out of school in KwaZulu Natal: Policy  
implications for poverty alleviation.**

By

**Thabani Buthelezi**

**201506530**

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## **DECLARATION**

This dissertation is original work by the author and has not been submitted in any other form or to any other university. Where use has been made of the work of other authors and sources it has been accordingly acknowledged and referenced in the body of the dissertation.

The research for this dissertation was completed in the School of Development Studies at the University of Natal, Durban. This dissertation was completed under the supervision of Professors Eleanor Preston-Whyte and Akim Mturi during the period September 2002 to 2003.

Opinions expressed are those of the author.

Signature: .....

Date: .....

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## ABSTRACT

Contrary to many efforts by the new South African government in its commitment to widen access to educational opportunities and the provision of a free education for all, dropping out of school episodes remain a major threat to the gains of the past nine years in the new South Africa.

Using the second wave of 'Transitions to Adulthood in the Context of Aids in South Africa' dataset, this dissertation investigates dropping out of school episodes. A dropout refers to an adolescent who discontinued his/her education before completing grade 12. In particular the study investigates the major determinants of dropouts. Reasons cited for dropping out of school varies from economic, individual, social and school based. It was found that the major contributor to the dropping out of school episodes in KwaZulu-Natal is poverty. Hence the impact of poverty is widely acknowledged as being among the most serious problems facing post-apartheid South Africa.

It is against this backdrop that this dissertation seeks an immediate response by government to invest in human capital, particularly in education, as means to alleviate poverty. The government among others therefore should recommit itself in providing and funding education for all. Both access and opportunities to schooling need to be widened.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Few events have more intense consequences in the life of a person than dropping out of school. A dropout is, in all likelihood, forever constrained in accessing the world of work, in meeting family responsibilities, and in commanding the life of a responsible citizen. Not many years ago in South Africa there were reasonable jobs, which provided a reasonable level of economic security without education as a prerequisite. A school dropout had a chance in life<sup>1</sup>. With so much technological development, today many manufacturing jobs have been lost to automation. As a result the kind of work that provides a reasonable level of economic security requires not only a high school, but also a post-high school education. In today's South Africa, even entry-level jobs require some level of education. Although it is easy to rely on simplistic explanations and to place blame, we must be wary of easy assumptions about the cause and effect. As will be seen in the findings of this dissertation, *dropping out of school is not the sole cause of events such as an individual's violence, crime or single parenthood*. Rather, reasons associated with probability of dropping out of school are many and interrelated; what seems inescapable is the conclusion that dropping out of school is one of the important factors related to the difficulties our young people face.

It is in this light that this dissertation investigates factors contributing to school dropouts in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. At the heart of this dissertation are implications for poverty alleviation through the provision of universal education. The potential impact of poverty upon the education system demands complex and flexible mechanisms in order to avoid the developmental time-bomb of an illiterate and unskilled generation.

Since problems facing the continent's educational systems cannot be over-generalized because of their diversity with regard to history and development, this

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<sup>1</sup> This assertion does not suggest that the apartheid era should be celebrated for few and far in between opportunities accessed by the oppressed African majority. The statement is made to reinforce the contention of this study that lack of access to education in general further subjects people to the cycle of deprivation and underdevelopment since they can not earn livelihoods through income.

dissertation deliberately chooses to focus on the South African context and the challenges facing our present government in providing an equal and universal education for all. The problem and consequences of school dropout provides the focus of this dissertation.

The first chapter of this dissertation deals with the statement of the research problem; looks at some of the challenges facing the South African Education System; puts forth both the main and specific objectives of the study with key research questions; and finally definitions of key concepts are made. The first part of Chapter 2 offers a critical analysis of the South Africa's School Act 1996. This attempts to give a clear picture of the governments' role in providing equal and free education. In particular, the funding of school infrastructure together with costs of the learning process are dealt with. In addition to this, the role of the school government body (SGB) with regard to matters of funding, raising funds, school fees will be a focus of this section. The second part of Chapter 2 offers evidence drawn from the African and international literature relating to school dropouts and the impact of poverty on education. The literature suggests a multitude of reasons for school dropouts in different contexts. Hence economic factors and also, for instance, the more direct impact of HIV/AIDS in reducing household resources (especially income) seem alarming in many contexts, such as the sub-Saharan region. However this is not a deliberate dismissal or neglect of other major factors such as social issues, early teenage pregnancy and the multitude of individual factors that directly contribute to high levels of school dropout. The final part is the theoretical framework. This includes a close analysis of poverty theories and the extent to which these theories value education as a route to escape poverty will be discussed. This part also examines the theory of asset vulnerability developed by Moser (1998). Drawing upon this theory this dissertation advances its' own perspective by arguing that adolescents that drop out of school are largely from poor households. The poverty status of these households derives from the disruption of the available resources to be converted into cash essential to cater for the schooling costs and other necessary household amenities.

Broadly, I seek to determine factors that contribute to dropping out of school and the extent to which economic factors foster limited access to schooling. Chapter 3 deals with methodology employed for data analysis. The enquiry to be carried out



employs demographic information obtained from the survey carried out by a number of organisations, entitled the second wave of the Transitions to Adulthood: in the context of AIDS in South Africa.<sup>2</sup> This data set was compiled from quantitative data collection from young adults (ages 13-27), as well as data on their households and communities. The study also contains an exploration of some of the principal results from the survey data based on focus groups and other qualitative approaches. The study site is KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and was completed in 2001. Transitions to Adulthood is a prospective study of young adults' reproductive behaviour and sexual health; education and employment experiences; family and environmental conditions; and other factors in the lives of young adults that may influence their sexual behaviour as well as choices.

Chapter 4 offers a discussion of major findings obtained from data analysis supporting it with some evidence from literature. Major findings of this dissertation will be drawn from a logistic regression model employed to assess factors leading to school dropouts in the sample. Prior to this the relationship between poverty and the school dropouts will be discussed. Conclusion and recommendations at the policy level as well as for further research are offered in the final chapter of this dissertation.

## **1.2 Statement of the research problem**

In many parts of the world, public policy that seeks to respond to poverty alleviation conventionally involves two broad forms of intervention. On the one hand is a growth-based strategy, which puts stress on general improvements in economic activity. Underpinning this strategy is the assumption that poverty can be tackled through stimulating economic growth. This assumes that benefits accruing from economic growth will 'trickle down' to the poor (World Bank, 1998). Typically in this strategy, welfare transfers are seen as distorting the market and making it less efficient. Structural adjustment policies as designed and imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF); macroeconomic policies of stability and policies to foster good governance are classical examples of this category of intervention. Also falling within

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<sup>2</sup> Transitions to Adulthood in the context of AIDS in South Africa is a research project conducted by the School of Development Studies at the University of Natal, Durban; the Horizons Project; the Policy Research Division of the Population Council; Focus on Young Adults; and MEASURE/Evaluation Project of Tulane University in New Orleans.

this category are Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) prepared by governments through participatory processes, which detail a country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs to promote growth and reduce poverty.

On the other hand is 'targeted-based' strategies that move from the premise that the majority of benefits accumulated from the growth-based strategy may not reach the poor and the marginalized. Because such growth strategies often do not significantly reach the poor, "[s]pecially designed policies are therefore required which may deliver services, transfer assets or indeed, transfer income into the hands of identified groups" (Hunter and May, 2002: 1). Land reforms, transfer payments, universal education and free health care policies are examples of this category of intervention. In addition, indirect intervention strategies such as the provision of training in public works programmes impart skills that can supplement income and enable the acquisition of assets. Though these policies often operate in isolation of each other, some governments have opted to implement them simultaneously.

Whether in the Northern or Southern countries, both education and learning are essential processes to social, cultural and political participation, personal and community economic empowerment, and national development (Gow and Desmond, 2002). Any form of deprivation of these rights remains unwarranted and immoral. Within the South African context, deprivation of these rights was intrinsic to the apartheid system that gave unequal access to schooling based on population group. As in so many strongly patriarchal societies, differential access to education also fostered inequality based on gender differences. Despite the demolition of apartheid, access to schooling in South Africa remains both an unequal and unresolved issue, which, together with poverty and HIV/AIDS, represent the largest challenge to the education process in this country. In combination these factors escalate and entrench disparities existing within all sectors of society.

It is then not surprising that at the dawn of the new democratic South Africa, the new government formulated educational policies to address the rampant inequality bred during apartheid. These policies not only aimed to transform the unjust system of governance, but also tried to address poverty, especially in the historically disadvantaged black community. New educational policies in South Africa were designed and adopted to address the inequalities of the former apartheid system and to:

*provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development for all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, ... [and] contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society..." (Preamble, South African School Act, 1996, Government Gazette vol 377, 15 November, p.2).*

Yet a serious lack of capacity and/or other impediments to the implementation have undermined the success of these policy frameworks.

Indeed the noble vision, which has been shared by most governments in developing countries who have tried to provide for equal opportunities in education, especially at the primary school level, is difficult to achieve. In spite of some major changes, in practice, many educational systems continue to discriminate against rural communities, girls and women. In general the poor are unable to compete equally for the various educational programmes offered in schools, colleges, universities, and other tertiary institutions, thus condemning them and their children into a cycle of poverty.

### **1.3 Some of the challenges facing South African Education System**

Recent statistics show that the South African education system accommodates more than 12.3 million learners in schools and colleges, encompassing 29,386 primary and secondary schools and including 300,000 university students, 190,000 technikon students and 125,000 students in the Further Education and Training sector (Department of Education, 2001). But Faatar (1997: 346) noted that "the project of universalising access to schooling in a post-apartheid context is the challenge of placing two million out-of-school children of school-going age in school". Although Fataar makes no distinction between those never enrolled and the dropouts, the volume of out-of-school children in the post-apartheid era represented a huge challenge for government. The new South African government responded to this challenge by adopting policies that would, in theory inspire more access to education. However, without free access to all, this seems a dream. As schools are continually constrained by a lack of resources, they are left with no, or at least limited, options other than to charge school fees. In contrast, pronouncements made by United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF) executive director, Carol Bellamy at the 2000 African Development Forum, urged all African leaders to join the global campaign to

abolish all school fees for the continent's 42 million primary school aged children who are not going to school. Bellamy cited the failure to meet schooling costs as the main reason why children of all age groups are not in classrooms (Bellemmy, 2000). Further, according to UNESCO, the absence of school fees increases school enrolment. This became evident in Uganda when school enrolment doubled two years after a free education scheme was introduced.

The importance of education has also been highlighted in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Education has continued to gain much attention as a social supplement to medical interventions. In theory altering sexual behaviour of the most vulnerable generation in most societies could do this. It needs to be pointed out that the campaign to abolish all fees and other costs for primary school-age children is part of a broader UNICEF effort to place education at the forefront of the world's HIV/AIDS fighting agenda (Bellemmy 2000). Kelly (2000) views education as having a long-term role in relation to HIV/AIDS prevention because it establishes conditions that render HIV transmission less likely. However, the author also cautions "this is not to affirm that education alone is the long-term answer to the problem of HIV transmission, no more than it is the sole answer to the question of poverty reduction" (Kelly, 2000: 38).

The importance of education in fighting HIV/AIDS is further asserted by van Dyk (2001: 195) who noted that, "school has a very important role to play in empowering children with the necessary knowledge, attitudes, values and lifeskills to protect themselves against HIV infection and AIDS". However, she also warns that schools may not be a sufficient targeting avenue for HIV prevention, as school dropouts, street children, as well as orphans would be missed. Instead she proposes that in addition to an array of schooling opportunities, other organisations such as churches, civic organisation, youth groups, and individual volunteers be instrumental in reaching those who do not attend schools (van Dyk, 2001).

This dissertation tries not to underplay some of the major improvements that have taken place in the South African education system to date. These include the formation of a single national Department of Education, the provision of new schools, increased funding and supply of school resources. Nor does it contend that the new government has not improved the quality of education through curriculum change and implementation and committed itself to the provision of better education for all. Yet it

appears that limited and sometimes virtual absence of resources in many schools hampers the education system in South Africa.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

This dissertation investigates factors that contribute to dropping out of school in both rural and urban KwaZulu-Natal and suggests policy implications for poverty alleviation.

##### **1.4.1 Main Objectives**

The over-arching aim of this study is to identify reasons that lead learners to drop out of schools. The hypothesis adopted by this paper is that *“adolescents that dropout of school tend to come from poor households”*. In this context, schooling costs is seen as a major reason for this. Schooling costs refer, in addition to fees, to expenses such as uniforms, transport costs, educational trips, as well as learning aids or materials (such as text books and stationery). However, this paper will use ‘fees’ and ‘costs’ interchangeably. No specific distinction is made between these concepts; both will be used to refer to a total amount of money paid towards the education of children – directly or indirectly by either parents or guardians. Direct costs for schooling are usually in a form of tuition or school fees. Indirect costs to education include educational materials such textbooks, exercise books, ball-pens, and pencils, as well as school-related activities such as clubs, sports, excursions, and other recreational activities. School uniforms, lunch boxes, as well as transport costs features in the latter category as well. A distinction between fees and other costs is made in the following statement from the National Policy on Norms and Standards for Funding of Schools, which defines “fees” as follows:

It includes the present annualised value of any past or future once-off payment, using a market rate of interest for investments of equal certainty. It also includes any other form of payment by a parent, or equity in the school taken by a parent, as a form of fee payment-equivalent. The highest level of fees normally charged at the school, as opposed to fees discounted for once-off payment, will be taken as representative. Additional costs associated with the normal course of instruction which learners are expected to follow are to be considered fees, even if they are not formally called fees. However, payments for extra items or services, or for school materials that are procured by the school instead of having to be purchased by the parent, are not to be considered fees, as long as the cost of such items is similar to their open-market value, (1998:1).

At the core of the research is the question of whether poverty poses a major hindrance or threat to both urban and rural youth in completing their education and thus, whether schooling costs are a major contributor to dropping out of school episodes.

The discourse on the relationship between educational changes and social change is also relevant for this research. This is critical in the context of major transformations in South Africa, especially under the new government. Essentially, this involves looking at the extent to which education contributes to the creation of a just and egalitarian society free from the domination of an educated white elite minority. A key question for this research is the extent to which this new education system contributes to social reconstruction or leads to new forms of inequality. If education is understood as part of, and not a mere panacea for, broader social change, then it is important to look at how new educational policies fit within the country's overall long-term development strategy. This explicitly leads to questions of financial viability in the contemporary context, which "is the outcome of the current hegemonic discourse, shaped by the international and national policy context" (Fataar, 1997: 335). When looking at the South African context, Kallaway warned that "the apartheid state's educational reform is not merely political tinkering, but that it needs to be seen as part of a broader, more insidious pattern of educational conservatism emerging in the international arena" (Kallaway 1996, cited in Fataar, 1997: 335). Having said this, it is clear that it is beyond the scope of this study to look at the educational reformation processes and the links to broader social change.

#### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

In order to address specific objectives of this dissertation the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What is the prevalence of dropping out of school in KwaZulu-Natal?
2. What factors contribute to dropping out of school in South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal?
3. What policy change is necessary to reduce the rate of dropouts?

## **1.5 Definition of Concepts**

### **1.5.1 Defining Adolescents**

Adolescents are not a homogeneous group. Generally this group consist of people of ages 10-19 years of age (though this range can vary). In a 1998 joint statement the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reached a consensus on the following categorizations of young men and women: Adolescents are defined as 10-19 years of age; youth is classified as 15-24 years of age; and young people are defined as 10-24 years of age. In this research no specific age distinction has been made between these categories. Instead 'young people/adults' is used to refer to all those individuals included in the data set irrespective of age category, unless otherwise specified. It is however realised that these different age groups have their distinct needs and thus may be subject to different factors to impact their schooling career.

No specific definition is offered by the Transitions to Adulthood data set and the terms youth, adolescents, boys and girls are used interchangeably. The focus of the research study was on individuals between the ages of 13 and 27.

### **1.5.2 Defining 'Dropouts'**

This dissertation chooses to subscribe to a definition offered by Elliot and Voss that, "[a] dropout is a pupil who leaves school, for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies and without transferring to another school" (1974: 14). That is, in the context of this study an adolescent school dropout is defined as being in one of grades 1-12 at the start of the period under review, and left school at some stage during this time. In their study on high school dropouts in the United States they distinguish between involuntary, educationally handicapped, as well as intellectually capable school dropouts. Involuntary dropout results from external circumstances over which they have no control. Factors such as unavailability of school as well as parents' inability to pay school fees fit within this category. Educationally handicapped dropouts include those individuals who do not get promoted to the next higher grade because of their 'poor' performance. Lastly although intellectually capable dropouts possess all the potential and ability not only

to cope with schoolwork but also to perform outstandingly, their major problem lies in that their potential is not given an opportunity to be realised.

### **1.5.3 Defining Poverty**

This dissertation sees poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon. Poverty is both defined and measured differently by different authorities. According to the World Bank (1994) “poverty is not only a problem of low income; rather it is a multidimensional problem that includes low access to opportunities for developing human capital and to education” (quoted in Tilak, 2002:194-95). Combating or at least reducing poverty has been an important goal of development strategies in most developing countries today. This goal is also at the forefront of several international development institutions. The United Nations Decade for Poverty Eradication (1997-2006) illustrates this concern to reduce poverty. This is a global attempt to tackle problems of human degradation caused by abject poverty (UNESCO, 2001).

### **1.5.4 Defining Vulnerability**

In order to have a measure of household welfare which takes into account both average expenditures and the risk household bear a term ‘vulnerability’ is employed. Vulnerability is the resulting possibility of a decline of a decline in well-being of individuals, households and communities in the context of a changing environment (Moser, 1996). Assets (both tangible and intangible), activities and outcomes are used to determine vulnerability. Typically this recognises that a household’s sense of well-being depends not just on its average income or consumption expenditures, but on the risk it faces as well, particularly in households with fewer resources.



# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The first part of this chapter offers a critical analysis of the South African Schools' Act 1996. Unpacking this document is critical in establishing a clear picture of the governments' role in sustaining public school. This will be made in the extent to which the government commits itself to free and equal education, in particular, the funding of school resources and the learning process. In addition to this, the role of the school governing body (SGB) with regard to matters of funding, raising funds, school fees will also be examined. The second part of this chapter provides a brief discussion of findings found from an analysis of the 1993 South African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) data set. This is directed at giving a clear picture on the impact of schooling costs as a contributor to dropping out of school before the democratic transition period – from a national perspective. The third part of this chapter offers a review of both African and international literature on factors that hinder educational attainment.

### **2.2 State and Education**

#### **2.2.1 The role of the state in providing universal education**

Incidences of dropping out of school together with low enrolments in many developing countries are closely related to lack or absence of the universal education. Faatar (1997) argued that the ability of the developing countries to provide universal education depends largely on their economic conditions and development goals. "The provision of schooling in the South [i.e. the developing countries] depends on the ability of those countries to develop an overall long-term development strategy in which educational development and schooling provision form a central part" (Fataar, 1997: 345). Yet Stiglitz (2001) realizes major constraints to such conclusions. He realises that the government's inability to provide basic needs such as education is not their fault but rather fostered by pressures and processes of globalisation. He further notes that disappointments with the international system of globalisation under the shield of financial institutions such as the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) intensifies as poor families in many developing countries have to pay for their children's education under the so-called cost recovery programs. As a result most of them are forced to make the painful choice of not sending their children to school. Obviously this shifts the blame outside the boundaries of the developing countries and sees conditions that exist as created by the superimposed global economic strategies upon the developing countries. These conditions are well articulated by the dependency theory of development.

Watkins (1999) projected that by 2015 the Sub-Saharan region will account for a great share of children out of schools. He calculated that, by 1999 the region accounted for one third of the out-of-school population and cites five major reasons why children are out-of-school in this region. First, are reasons associated with high costs of sending children to school. Parents in poor families, have the burden of providing many of the costs relating to education, such as: official fees, levies, unofficial fees, the costs of uniforms, transport, pencils and books, and community contributions. Second, both debt repayments and budgetary constraints make it extremely difficult for many countries in the region to spend on education.

Third, are reasons that relate to the location of schools in some communities – from home to school. Tied to this factor is the parents' concern over their children's safety as well as their role at the household level – carrying out household chores. "Millions of children in the developing world embark each day on long journeys to their schools, making parents anxious about their safety. Time spent walking to school also has an effect on household labor, with children having less time to care for their siblings, fetch water, or work on family farms" (Watkins, 1999).

The fourth reason which links to the second reason is the fact that low economic growth has limited the capacity of many of the poorest countries to finance primary education. Finally, is the issue of public-expenditure priorities. More often than not some governments seem unable to prioritise basic education on their national agenda. Noting that the sub-Saharan region is the world's poorest and least educated region, Watkins (1999) problematises the governments' notion of priorities within this region. He finds it extraordinary that some governments find it appropriate to spend as much on armaments as on primary education.

### **2.2.2 The new government addresses past inequalities**

Within the South African context the culture of dropping out of school has occurred despite the post-apartheid governments' commitment to providing a meaningful and appropriate education for all its citizens. It needs to be noted that Oxfam and institutions such as the World Bank and IMF subscribes to the fundamental objective of education for all. As a result the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) explicitly upholds and considers education as a vehicle for poverty reduction. It has been widely observed that poverty remain high among people without any schooling, (Watkins, 1999). Linkages that exist between education and poverty are often debated. On one hand, there are stories about successful and prominent people such as entrepreneurs and politicians who have had no education. However this should not blur the fact that the under-educated are reported to be disproportionately concentrated amongst the poor (Watkins, 1999).

It needs to be pointed out that the demand for the provision of free and compulsory education in South Africa was a prominent feature of the Freedom Charter adopted by the Congress Alliance in 1955. "This demand was part of the general vision advanced by the oppressed people of South Africa in reaction to the implementation of apartheid policies" (Fataar, 1997: 344). Wolpe (1991) points out that the Freedom Charter states, "The doors of learning and culture shall be opened! Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children" (quoted in Fataar, 1997: 344). This People's Education discourse became one of the key areas the new government sought to address.

### **2.2.3 Policies for Education Transformation in South Africa**

In principle policies adopted by the new South African government depicts their commitment towards the realization of the free, compulsory and equal education. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (No. 108 of 1996), puts it clearly that, "Everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible" (Section 29(1)). This has also been well articulated by the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) in a declaration adopted in 1989, "Education is a basic human right.

Schooling should be free and compulsory for all children” (NECC, 1989 cited in Fataar, 1997: 344).

In addition the principal objective enshrined in the South African Schools Act, (SASA) 1996 is the provision of a “uniform system for the organization, governance and funding of schools”. According to this, school includes learning programmes that occur between grade 0 or grade R for “reception” through to grade 12 formerly called standard 10 or matric. However these objectives have not been achieved to date. It is in this light that the central objective of this paper seeks to investigate the impact of schooling costs as a contributor to dropouts among schools in both urban and rural KwaZulu-Natal.

A critical investigation of the dissertation would be made within SASAs’ provision for “compulsory attendance of learners at school between the ages of seven and fifteen (or the completion of grade 9). This is known as the compulsory or General Education phase” (section 3). Also this dissertation takes note of the fact that the Act imposes other important responsibilities on the state in particular, the funding of all public schools. Wolpe (1991) refers to the inevitability of making educational choices given the “limited resources to meet not only education needs but also other basic needs such as housing, health and welfare services” (quoted in Fataar: 1997: 338).

Unlike in many other countries, the nature in which disparities in both provision and access to schooling in South Africa are a product of continuing inequality. To some extent they reflect a history of colonialism, segregation, and apartheid. But with a paradigm shift in state power from the apartheid state to a legitimate democratic state, the historically disadvantaged and marginalized majority of South Africa looked to the state to improve their conditions. During months after April 1994 elections, most ministers in the Government of National Unity (GNU) developed policies for the reconstruction of South Africa. “A reconstruction ethos has rapidly acquired broad-based societal consensus, although its substantive meaning is fiercely contested” (Fataar, 1997: 332).

Reconstruction of a single education system based on equality and equity had to contend with a fundamentally distorted legacy. The new dispensation inherited a highly fragmented educational system. Several subsystems catered for the various ethnic and racial groups. With the new government in power the White Paper on

Education and Training (WPET) was published in February 1995 under a single national education department – the Department of Education and Culture. At the core of this policy document is the launch of a multi-dimensional educational reconstruction programme that marks a radical departure from the ethos of the apartheid education.

There are two central priorities in the pursuit of a new education system founded on the values of equality, non-sexism, non-racism and redress. The WPET prioritises access to schooling as one of two specific policy initiatives central to a new schooling system. The second priority is on the organisation, governance and the funding of schools (Fataar, 1997). When analysing the WPET Faatar makes reference to the statement by the Ministry of Education that clearly commits the government in making education more accessible as well as taking a sole responsibility for the funding of education. Quoted by Faatar the Ministry of Education asserted that:

*The government is committed to the goal of providing access to general education for all children from a reception year up to Grade 9 (Standard 7), funded fully by the state at an acceptable level of quality, and to achieve this goal in the shortest possible time (Ministry of Education 1995 in Faatar, 1997: 345).*

The above puts it clearly that the WPET commits the state to providing ten years of compulsory and free education made up of a pre-school ‘reception year’ and nine years of basic education. One needs to bear in mind that the WPET concentrates mostly on the quantitative provision of schooling. While on the other hand it envisages that an emphasis on quality will lead to the optimal use of financial and other resources.

Assessments made on the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (SASA 1996) suggest that the National Ministry of Education does not decide on the amounts to be allocated for provincial education departments. It also does not prescribe the actual minimum amount in Rands to be spent per learner. According to the national norms:

*...the national and provincial levels of government will honour the state's duty, in terms of the Constitution and the SASA, to progressively provide resources to safeguard the right to education of all South Africans. However, educational needs are always greater than the budgetary provision for education. To effect redress and improve equity, therefore, public spending on schools must be specifically targeted to the needs of the*

*poorest. This will apply to both the General Education (grades 1-9) and the Further Education and Training (grades 10-12) phases, (section 44).*

For the first time in the history of South African school governance, SASA 1996 leaves the governance of all public schools to School Governing Bodies (SGBs). The principal function of this body is to govern the school.

Section 36 of the SASA imposes a responsibility upon the SGBs to do their utmost to improve the quality of education by raising additional resources to augment those provided by the state. According to the National Norms and Standards for School Funding, “[a]ll parents, but particularly those who are less poor or who have good incomes, are thereby encouraged to increase their own direct financial and other contributions to the quality of their children’s education in public schools” (1998).

It appears that the SASA 1996 funding provisions appear to empower communities. In turn this ‘empowerment’ blurs some of the fundamental contradictions in most South African communities. Seemingly this funding provision advantages public school patronised by the middle-class and wealthy parents. Bearing in mind that the apartheid system exclusively funded schools in such communities, the vigorous fund-raising by parents from such schools intensifies the differences that exist between public schools in poor communities and those in non-poor communities. In addition a well-resourced school with wealthy parents have continued to be exempted from the staff establishment downsizing processes. Many have been able to even recruit more staff on governing body contracts, paid from the available school funds.

Juxtaposed to this are poor communities, especially in the former homeland areas who only contributed and continue to contribute an uneven share of their low incomes. Over many decades these contributions are for the building, upkeep and improvement of schools, and also school funds and other contributions, including physical labour. Many of them can contribute little due to unemployment. It is in this light that many public schools in such communities are characterised by overcrowded classes, deplorable physical conditions, and absence of learning resources. The same schools are however expected to achieve the same levels of learning and teaching as their more fortunate compatriots.

Noting these sharp contradictions the National Norms and Standards for School Funding 1998 document, proposes a sharply progressive state funding policy

for ordinary public schools. This is an attempt to cater for school in poor communities. Though SASA imposes the responsibility of the SGBs raising funds to augment resources from the government, the document maintains that SGBs are not 'required' to charge school fees. The process of determining school fees is however unclear or not stated in detail. National Norms and Standards for Funding (1998) stipulate the following procedure in determining school fees:

- SGBs must present the school's annual budget at a general meeting of parents for approval,
- Having presented all the necessary information about the school's income, from the state and other resources and its educational needs, parents then decides what additional revenues the school needs.
- Upon deciding the document expects SGBs to take into serious consideration the financial circumstances of all the parents and households in the community. As the act puts it - the amount of fees to be charged must include, "equitable criteria and procedures for the total, partial or conditional exemption of parents who are unable to pay" the school fees (section 39(2)). The underlying assumption by the Ministry of Education is that more affluent or less-poor parent communities will contribute more, because the government funding per capita in their schools will be less than in school with poor parent communities.
- Should the majority of parents vote in favour of school fees each parent is responsible for paying the required fees, unless granted the exemption privilege? "But no learner can be denied admission, or otherwise discriminated against, on grounds of the parent's inability or failure to pay fees", (National Norms and Standards for Funding of Schools, 1998).

It is clear that the SGB of a certain school may decide not to charge any fees in which case the question of exemption is not an issue. Or to charge a very minimal amount, also to avoid any form of exemption. Bear in mind that the parents' ability to afford any amount of fees may vary considerable. Therefore it is critical to determine the extent to which all these procedures are followed in practice.



The above discussion suggests that the South African government has so far committed itself in the provision – though not fully achieved – of a universal primary education. This stems from a distinction made by Buchert (2002) that universal primary education is not synonymous to education for all.

*Ensuring that all children have access to a primary education cycle of a specified number of years, i.e. providing Universal Primary Education, is not the same thing as ensuring that all children, young people and adults have learning outcomes which permit them to participate in development – which is the essence of the expanded concept of Education for All launched in Jomtein in 1990, (7-8).*

Therefore it appears that one would expect to find no incidences of dropping out of school at a primary school level in South Africa.

### **2.3 Reasons for Dropping out of school**

The African and International literatures relating to the problems of school dropout show a discrepancy in the degree of emphasis on the underlying factors that hinder the completion of school. That is, factors explaining dropping out of school are many, complex, and interrelated. No one has been able to provide a solution for dropping out of school problem, but clues can be found by looking at the previous empirical research findings, which identify factors correlated with dropping out of school. In many parts of the world, socio-economic, individual factors, as well as school-based characteristics are associated with the probability of leaving school early that is, dropping out. In addition to these factors some of the recent literature has shown that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS has fuelled the already high levels of school dropouts and been responsible for the low enrolments in schools. Thus this dissertation has chosen some literature that relates to school dropouts, as well as that which looks at the impact of poverty on education.

It is imperative to begin by establishing whether the act of dropping out is either forced by circumstances or a deliberate decision on the part of an individual. Dropping out of school should often not be seen as a mere act of disobedience, but one that is better characterized by processes that maybe beyond the individuals' capability to escape or control and can conceal events through many years of an individual's life. Wagenaar (1987) states:

*The precursors to dropping out, the decision to drop out, the process of dropping out, the responses to dropping out and the consequences of*



*dropping out all result from a complex interplay of personal, social, situational and contextual factors associated with the probability of leaving school early, that is, dropout (cited in Human Resource Development Canada, 2001).*

### **2.3.1 Some major trends for dropping out of school**

Episodes of dropping out of school are prevalent across Africa for both men and women (Gachukia, 1992). According to Gachukia, amongst other factors associated with high dropouts in most African countries include:

- Household socio-economic status and constraints,
- Socio-cultural attitudes and the value attached to female education,
- Delineation of labour at the household level (this in the African context over-burdens females),
- Early marriage,
- Teenage pregnancy (usually with limited or no alternative forms of schooling or options for young mothers),
- Labour market bias, and
- Lack of motivation resulting from irrelevant and inappropriate organization of the curriculum and poor teaching.

This suggests a variety in scope for reasons that relate to dropping out of school. It is however not clear whether these factors are unique to African countries.

### **2.3.2 Findings about dropouts using SALDRU data**

Some of these factors associated with dropping out of school were evident from the analysis conducted using the 1993 Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) dataset.<sup>3</sup> The principal purpose of the survey which was undertaken during the nine months leading up to the country's first

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<sup>3</sup> These findings were the outcomes of the University of Cape Town summer workshop I attended in 2002. This workshop is for social science research using household survey presented by the SALDRU, University of Cape Town in collaboration with the School of Public Policy, University of Michigan, US (<http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/saldru/>).

democratic elections at the end of April 1994, was to collect information about the conditions under which South Africa live. This was to provide policy makers with the data required for planning strategies to implement goals of the Government of National Unity's (GNU) Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). This is a nationally representative, multi-purpose household survey. From 360 clusters approximately 9,000 households were sampled for collecting rich data on a number of subjects. These include (but were not limited to) household composition, education, health, fertility, expenditures, employment and other income earning activities.

In establishing reasons for dropping out of school, dropouts were asked to give reasons for discontinuing with school. The reasons for dropping out of school were both individual and categorical level variables. The analysis revealed that amongst all other factors leading to dropping out of school, high school expenses remained the most cited single reason - accounting for 17.12 percent of the respondents.

In generating reasons for dropping out of school the above listed single reasons given for no longer enrolled were combined into four different related categories. After combining these single reasons into these related categories, economic factors remained the strongest factor. Economic factors account for 35 percent. An interesting point to note is that in spite of mounting violence together with other social unrest that was prevalent during 1993 (period towards elections), such factors had minimal impact on education as compared to poverty. In addition to this, as to be argued in chapter 3 single reasons such as 'became pregnant' and 'could not cope with school work' may not only be attributed to individual/personal factors, but instead appear to link with factors such as economic and social.

It would appear that assessments of this dataset suggest very strong linkages between dropping out of school and being poor. That is, a large proportion of those who dropped out of school come from poor households. A continuous variable was employed to measure poverty levels. Rather than using income related variables, household total monthly expenditure was used as a poverty index. The latter variable was manipulated to measure and indicate poverty at an individual level – per capita total monthly expenditure. Thus those whose per capita monthly expenditure was below R159, 36 were considered poor while those who exceeded this figure remained as non-poor. Note that the cut-off margin – that is the poverty line – was done at 50

percent without following any particular technique devised by poverty analysts. Nor did it take into account the poverty datum at the time of the survey.

Major findings from assessing the impact of poverty on education show that 74.17 percent of the poor dropouts did so because school expenses are too high. Amongst the non-poor 80.55 percent reported that they had completed school - matriculated. Dropping out of school because of pregnancy appears to be high among those who are from poor households – accounting for 66.53 percent.

Statistical analysis that included race showed that Africans in the data set are mostly poor and drop out of school because of economic factors. It is critical to point out that neither Whites nor Indians in the data set drop out of school because of economic related reasons. Instead they drop out of school because of individual related factors such as lack of interest in school or could not cope with school. The latter reason was common amongst the Coloured dropouts.

The problem of school drop out at the primary level was also evident before the 1994 elections. 88.28 percent of children from primary school level – grades 1-7 - dropped out of school because of high school expenses alone. While for the same single reason dropouts from secondary school accounted for 71.60 percent of all the dropouts. This analysis explicitly demonstrates that dropping out of school incidences were prevalent during the apartheid regime. These figures will be compared with results from the most recent data set in the next chapter.

### **2.3.3 Socio-economic factors conducive to ‘dropping out of school’**

Mturi and Nzimande (2002) in their study assessing HIV/AIDS and child labour in South Africa, report that despite the governments’ provision of some funds to assist in the running of the school, schools usually ask parents to pay school fees. They assert that school governing bodies have a right to enforce such payment of fees. Their qualitative research findings show that almost all reasons cited for leaving school are closely related to poverty of the household, and many children leave school due to their parents or guardians inability to afford school fees. Citing directly some of their respondents reported that:

*My mother is unemployed and my grandmother pays my school fees...(I have not been in school the whole of this year) by the time my grandfather died I was doing sub A. He then passed away then I continued with sub B then this year I was supposed to do standard one but I did not go back to school...there was no money. Hawker.*

*It sometimes happens that there is no money to pay my school fees and I have to stop attending school. At the moment everything is all right, Farm-worker. (both cases appear in Mturi and Nzimande, 2002: 36)*

They argue that, “[b]y the look of things, parents are either not informed of this right or are refused to be exempted from paying school fees”, (Mturi and Nzimande, 2002: 36). It is however beyond the scope of this paper to determine the nature of ‘measures’ taken by school against children whose parents or guardians fail to afford to pay school fees. But it would be critical to find out the nature of those measures – are they in a form of blacklisting the parent as a bad-payer, expulsion of the child in question, or the child’s results get withheld?

To a large extent, this study shares similar findings with Moser’s (1996) urban study on poor communities where she found that children who worked did not necessarily discontinue schooling, but against all odds, strove to continue, even if they had to miss days and even weeks of instruction. Hence disruption as a result of absenteeism may be inevitable.

When reporting on the problem of child labour, Doohan (2000) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) noted that, "household work is reported to be the main reason for about one-third of the youngsters who do not attend school. They were either never enrolled or were obliged to drop out of school because of full-time housework", (Doohan 2000, quoted in Inter Press Service).

Socio-economic factors have been found to be a major contributor in explaining dropouts in primary schools in Pakistan. There are two main categories of factors leading to this problem: out-of school and in-school. The former category for leaving primary school is financial. Children dropping out of school have come from low-income households. Some Pakistani studies have shown poverty to be the main reason forcing children out of school. “In these families, children also play the role of breadwinner. Changes in labour market conditions or household composition can mean the indirect costs of education are now higher or the direct costs cannot be met. Children must work to support their families or their families can no longer afford to send them to school”, (Staff Writer, 2002 in YesPakistan.com)

The in-school category contributing to dropping out relates to the individuals’ inability to cope with school; that is low learning achievement. “Some children repeatedly fail and so stay in the same grade year after year. Such repetition

reduces the benefits of schooling and the lengthening of the school cycle increases the costs of education”, (Staff Writer, 2002 for YesPakistan.com, May and Hunter, 2002). In addition to this, corporal punishment has been another much-cited in-school reason for dropping out.

Filmer and Pritchett (1998) in their study on the effect of household wealth on educational attainment around the world used the household survey data from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) from 44 surveys to document patterns in both enrolment and attainment of children from rich and poor households. First they found that, the enrolment profiles of the poor differ across countries but varies and fall into distinctive regional patterns. For example, in South America though the poor reach a relative universal enrolment in first grade but they drop out and low attainment remains high. On the other hand, in South Asia and Western/Central Africa enrolment was found to be nil. Second, there are immense differences across countries in the wealth gap, that is, the difference in enrolment and educational attainment of the rich and poor. Lastly, the attainment profiles were also determined by the extent to which low enrolment results from the physical absence of schools (Filmer and Pritchett, 1998).

Also falling within the socio-economic factors is the extent to which parents value the education of their children. “Indeed, the socio-economic condition of a child’s parental background and the attitude parents hold about a child’s education could be indicators of a child’s early withdrawal from school when conditions are ripe for it in the school itself” (Fobih, 1987: 229). Also subscribing on the notion of dropouts as a social problem is Dorn (1996) who focuses mainly on the social costs of dropping out. This study found the differences between the odds of completing school among children whose parents have property or sizable income and also for those who have minimal income and no house. “Those who are well-off are able to use education to help pass on economic advantages to their children” (Dorn, 1996: 26). This ties up with the manner in which household assets or resources can be utilized for the benefit of the household members, particularly children. A linkage between the parents’ education and the likelihood that a child will drop out of school has been documented in the latter study. Dorn argues that, “the main problem with the dominant social construction of dropping out is the assumption that it is the burden of schools to socialize adolescents and prevent delinquency and dependency” (1996: 4).

In addition, there is a relationship between social class and dropping out among children of poorly educated parents in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations. There has been evidence of school dropouts among children whose parents had never finished high school and whose parents who had been dropouts themselves (Schreiber, 1964). Other reasons cited in the study by Mturi and Nzimande (2002) varied from lack of interest, dislike or hate school; having to care for the sick at home, household and family related problems, child and teenage pregnancy, running away from home.

#### **2.3.4 Individual factors for dropping out of school**

The dropout phenomenon has been further linked to academic courses as the great majority of those dropping out of school are usually enrolled in the so-called general stream that is, the human or social sciences subjects such as History, Geography, and so forth (Schreiber 1964). Whilst others cited level of intelligence or intellectual capacity measured in terms of IQ as a contributing factor. These reasons vary from, reading retardation, grade retention, low intelligence, negative self-image and family attitudes. Also at the individual level, incidences of grade retention as well as grade repetition have been linked to the drop out discourse or disruption of schooling. Yet grade retention has been propounded as being a controversial educational practice (Eisemon, 1997). On one hand the schools' system policies together with educators' attitude toward the benefit of retention determines the retention rates (Karweit 1999). On the other level, multitude of backgrounds together with demographic factors has been found to have a greater impact on grade retention (Karweit 1999). Grissom and Shepherd (1989) have found that failing a grade is strongly associated with dropping out of school. They argue that retaining learners are more exposed to risks of dropping out that cannot be explained by their poor achievement. In addition, grade repetition has been found to be both a social and educational problem. Other than demoralizing and detrimental to the child's ego, grade repetition, is also viewed as draining resources (Hunter and May, 2002).

Elliott and Voss (1974) in their study of dropouts in the United States see delinquency and school dropouts as synonymous for they both constitute a fundamental social problem. But it needs to be pointed out that while their literature does not reach consensus in this regard, they are however silent about poverty as a

major source of either delinquency or dropouts. Elliott and Voss noted that the “modern dropout encounters a different world than did his counterpart in the 1920s who found a job, married, and raised a family; without great difficulty he became a conventional citizen” (1974: 3). Even more so in the 2000s, drastic technological changes have made it impossible for the dropouts to secure jobs with less than a high school education and also community’s economic system further fails to accommodate them.

In an attempt to balance causes leading to dropouts, Tanner et al (1995) challenged the traditional studies, which only focused on individually based causes. Their study assumed that, “young people drop out because they are not motivated, are not committed, or do not have the required skills or career expectations”. Instead they balance causes leading to dropouts between individual and “structural factors including characteristics of the schools, curriculum content, and the changing character of the labour market” (Tanner et al, 1995: 15).

### **2.3.5 Teenage pregnancy and disruption of schooling**

Early teenage pregnancy and schooling disruption are causally interlocked, and have been attributed to poverty, as well as to a lack of sex education and parental care. Early sexual relations have been seen as a major factor associated with dropout among adolescent learners (Fobih, 1987: 231). But it is largely girls who are affected by this. Kaufman, et al (2000) noted that childbearing levels for adolescent girls in South Africa do not appear to be changing. Using the South Africa Demographic Health Survey (SA-DHS) more than 30 percent of 19-year-old girls had given births in 1998 (Kaufman *et al*, 2000). In addition, the South African Participatory Poverty Assessment (SA-PPA) reported that in South Africa adolescent pregnancy is a major cause of interrupted and discontinued education, (May et al 1998). This has been further documented by Mturi and Nzimande (2002), “because having a child is also perceived as a sign of adulthood, the parents of the child often have to leave school to provide care for the child. For boys this is in the form of financial care, and for girls it is child rearing”, (37).

Klugman et al (1998:40) refer to other authors when saying that the teenage pregnancy rate in South Africa was 14, 6% of teenage-girls in 1991. Furthermore, of every 1 000 births, 330 to 400 are from young women and girls under 19 years. A

study conducted in the Eastern Cape found that in rural Transkei alone the prevalence of adolescent schoolgirl pregnancy was 31, 3%. It was however not stated if all these adolescent pregnant schoolgirls fell out of school. Nevertheless, Wood et al (no date: 3) writes that these figures are undoubtedly very high, and that the significance of these rates reveals itself more fully if they are regarded as both determinants and indicators of poor sexual and reproductive health, and of broader social problems among this group. As already noted, the South Africa DHS undertaken during 1998 found that by the age of 19 years, 35 percent of all teenagers have been pregnant or have had a child (Department of Health, 1998:26). It is said in the report that this represents a very high level of teenage fertility, which presents a continuing source of concern to the government and researchers, (Department of Health, 1998). Kaufman *et al* (2000), found that in South Africa, in contrast, to many other settings, teenage mothers might return to school once they have given birth and that this opportunity is strongly related to a long delay before the birth of a second child.

#### **2.3.6 Other contributing factors**

Initiatives such as Primary School Nutrition Scheme (PSNP) put in place by the government in some regions are clear indications of the governments' efforts to address poverty based on starvation and malnutrition. Indeed these have definitely benefited children from low-income families, particularly the most vulnerable and poor households. Addressing this aspect from the basic needs approach (BNA), Ngcobo (2001: 244) asserted that "school feeding is not only a welfare issue, but is fundamentally treated as contributing to both conducive learning and direct income redistribution to the most vulnerable in society".

Conversely to such critical benefits their minimal availability or worse their absence intensifies vulnerability for children from poor households and simultaneously create chances for dropouts. The parent's inability to provide lunch box for the child is vastly crippled or hindered by the requirements to pay school fees, buy school uniforms and textbooks. It is reported that in one of the sampled household the child of the informant was removed from school due to the informants' inability to pay school fees. "In addition to not having to pay school fees the mother says she could not provide her daughter with a lunch box and that was a disgrace for the household" (Seguala *et al*, 2002: 56). Other than having to pay for school fees, buying



uniform and providing lunch box for their children, the culture of reciprocity at the school level exacerbate their already heavy burdens. Children in the study report pay 50c towards the funeral costs when there has been a death in school of either child or a teacher, while a payment of R1 was also reported to be paid as condolence to the bereaved family. Note that such financial contributions are of massive relief to the bereaved families during the preparation for the funeral and may also be a valuable input towards the nowadays-costly funeral function itself.

In addition, Segaula *et al* (2002) cited Nampaya-Serpell who conducted a study in Zambia and found that the characteristic household response to AIDS was a shift from relative wealth to relative poverty. This shift was found to be most evident among urban paternal orphans whose families had to move to a poorer dwelling without either electricity or piped water, and also children removed from school. Tanzanian orphans were also removed from school due to lack of money for school fees, uniforms and supply, (study by Lundberg, Over and Mujinja cited in Soguala *et al*, 2002: 14).

In summary, it can be said that a multitude of factors can best explain the reasons that force children to drop out of school prematurely. While in some instances a single factor is responsible and yet a combination of factors has remained a major cause of this phenomenon. It remains beyond the scope of this dissertation to put the discussed factors on a particular scale but rather to acknowledge the various impacts they have on the disruption of the children's education regardless of gender, class and racial backgrounds. Hence evidence from the reviewed literature suggests that female children, Black children as well as those coming from the poor households are victimised by these factors the most. Also the potential impact of HIV/AIDS on the education system and human capital development in South Africa means that the epidemic has moved beyond a simple health concern. So not only is the education system a primary site for prevention activities by an educated population are also the cornerstone for social and economic development of a country.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.4.1 Poverty and the importance of Education in National Development**

Tilak (2002) discussed a multitude of approaches towards the reduction of poverty including direct measures like provision of food, employment, and even income to the poor. On the other hand indirect measures, such as provision of education, health, and other services, enable people to earn or increase their earnings so as to escape poverty trap. Hence the latter measures are discussed.

The first approach on the indirect measures is the human capital approach. This approach regards education as a vital instrument to reduce a country's poverty level. The theory underpinning this approach maintains that investment in education guides the formation of human capital. For this is an important factor of economic growth. Basically this theory sees education as contributing to poverty alleviation and development directly through increasing health, nutrition, democracy, and other similar elements contributing to the well being of an individual. Education contributes directly by influencing productivity and earnings. In addition, this theory views education as contributing to desired social changes.

Intertwined with human capital approach is the human development perspective, which also focuses on investing in human capital, particularly in education, as a means to alleviate poverty. Enlarging people's choices and making them both means and ends is essential to this approach rather than expanding their income and wealth. This theory "recognises education primarily not as an instrument or means of development, but as poverty alleviation itself, while lack of the same constitutes not just a cause of poverty, but poverty itself. Educational deprivation or poverty of education becomes an integral part of human poverty" (Tilak, 2002: 195).

The basic needs approach recognises education as a basic need. Education as a basic need helps in both the fulfilment of other basic needs and an improved quality of life. Fulfilment of other basic needs includes access to better health facilities, shelter, water and sanitation, and its subsequent effect on women's status, decisions relating to their reproductive preferences, and family welfare and health. It needs to be highlighted that, "the basic needs approach does not directly value the income-increasing role of education *per se*, it nevertheless also views education not only just as an end (as a basic need) in itself, but also as means of fulfilling other basic

needs” (Tilak, 2002: 194). These earnings may not be quantifiable but lead to an improved environment and better living conditions.

Finally the human capability approach focuses on the ability of individuals or people to command their lives and to multiply real choices they have and value. Tilak (2002) cites Sen (1999) in distinguishing between income poverty and capability poverty. Sen (1999) puts that:

*Capability poverty refers to deprivation of opportunities, choices, and entitlements... [and thus] education can very significantly influence both income poverty and capability poverty, and also capability poverty. In fact, education deprivation is itself capability poverty and investing in education of the poor itself is reduction of capability poverty* (Tilak, 2002: 196).

One needs to bear in mind that beyond incorporating the whole notion of poverty alleviation, providing education for poor people needs to be seen as both moral and political correct. This ties up with the above-discussed approaches, which depict that education of children amongst poor households provides a valuable asset and an element of security for the future well being. It appears that poor people see education as an asset that needs to be protected at all costs. Education is thought to bring with it the improved health, the chance of prosperity, and hope for the future. It is also envisaged to open a life of pride and autonomy for both people and their countries (Kelly, 2000). That is education is a vehicle for empowerment. As Oxfam propounded “Education is the world’s single most powerful weapon against poverty. It saves lives. It gives people a chance to improve their lives” (Oxfam, 1999, quoted in Kelly, 2000: 38). This assumes that poor households view education as a critical route to break away from a life of poverty and other related disparities.

Tilak puts it clearly that “education is a life-empowering experience for all and what the poor need most is empowerment... education is not only *for* empowerment, but also education itself *is* empowerment” (Tilak, 2002: 197). This suggests that social as well as economic costs of depriving children a right to education are massive. This is in line with findings from the South African Participatory Poverty Assessment (SA-PPA), which indicate that among both rural and the urban poor; education is consistently seen as a fundamental need and the most effective route out of poverty. Therefore in such contexts education is often protected

at great costs. In addition, the importance of education as essential to escape poverty is further upheld within developing countries. As Fobih puts it:

*In the developing countries, education is regarded as a sine qua non for social, political, and economic development. It provides the skilled manpower needed in these countries and serves as the institutionalised process of socialization for the youth. Therefore, the nations of Africa, in spite of their precarious economic situation, devote a high proportion of their annual budget to providing educational services (Fobih, 1987: 229).*

#### **2.4.2 Household vulnerability**

The investigation in this paper operates within a framework that point to an increase of dropouts when the household resources get destabilised or cease to exist. Loss of employment, death of the household breadwinner and the impact of HIV/AIDS on straining household resources are elements of this framework. The costs of educating children in many poor households add to this array of disparities. All these factors cripple the household and put households in a more vulnerable position. It is in this context that this paper does not subscribe to traditional theories, which have looked at individual and social factors – in isolation of each other. Instead this paper derives from theories that acknowledge the significant role of harsh economic conditions on households as a major contributing factor. This theory becomes particularly relevant where universal education is not provided.

Indeed the education of the children from poor households is a valuable asset that needs to be fostered. In attempting to understand the contribution of poverty as well as shocks to dropout in the KwaZulu-Natal, South African context, Hunter (2001) maintained that both income and consumption approaches to poverty fail to account for the “complex external factors, which affect the poor, and their responses to economic difficulty” (10). It is in this light that this paper seeks to borrow from the asset-vulnerability approach in explaining household poverty. This is rooted on the realization that poor people are the most vulnerable group. Their vulnerable position exposes them to a variety of risks as well as shocks that can permanently cripple their capabilities. Both Moser (1996) and the World Bank (2000) view insecurity as a state of being (in which both individuals and households) exposed to risks, while on the other hand vulnerability is brought and intensified by a fall in the well being of individuals, households, and communities. The context of changing social

environments illustrates this fact. Maharaj *et al* (2000) also found that amongst the black population, family constraints and community resources are major factors in children's education.

Moser (1998) developed the asset vulnerability framework that focuses on the assets held by the poor people and also the ways in which they use or exchange them for survival and reproduction. Assets represent the stock of gross wealth of the household and the net worth is the gross wealth minus liabilities (Sherranden, 1991 in Moser, 1996). The asset stock is the base for future potential wealth and consumption. Moser, (1998) asserted that the ability to reduce vulnerability does not only depend on initial assets, but also on how to transform them into income, food or other basic necessities. The asset-vulnerability framework identifies five categories of assets: labour, housing, social and economic infrastructure, household relations, and social capital. The poor are seen to handle these different types of assets as multifaceted collections. "Such asset management strategies are shown to affect both processes of asset accumulation and household vulnerability" (Moser, 1998: 1).

It is thus based on the afore-discussed perspectives that this paper maintains that household poverty is a decisive factor in fuelling dropping out of school. With reduced household resources poor households have no option but to withdraw their children from schools. This results in children dropping out of school without any or minimal education. As a result of their uneducated status a culture of poverty is triggered.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter demographic information obtained from the second wave of 'Transitions to Adulthood in the context of AIDS' survey dataset is used to investigate factors that contribute to dropping out of school episodes, in particular the extent to which poverty contributes to this effect. This research study was carried out in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa in 2001. Young people are found at both primary and secondary school levels. Dropouts from both levels were included in this study.

#### **3.2 KwaZulu-Natal study site**

KwaZulu-Natal's population of 8.4 million people constitutes about one fifth of South Africa's 40.5 million people. KwaZulu-Natal is South Africa's third largest province and is located on the country's east coast along the Indian Ocean. The province occupies an area of 92 100 km. The population is about 45 percent urban (Stats SA, 1996) and includes Durban, the largest port and the third largest city in the country. Statistics on the National Report on Social Development (2000) show that the province is predominantly rural with 4.8 million population as compared to 3.6 million urban population. There is a higher proportion of females (4.5 million) than males (3.9 million) in the province. Africans are the majority group constituting 6,880,652 of the provinces' population with isiZulu as the principal language. Indians 790,814; Whites 558,152 and Coloureds constitute 117,951; population in the province (National Report on Social Development, 2000). Representatives from several traditions provide for an interesting mix of culture in the province. The poverty rate according to 1995 estimates stood at 50 percent, while the adult literacy rate in 1991 was 84.3 percent (Stats SA, 1996).

#### **3.3 The data set**

Transitions to Adulthood study looked at the adolescents' transition to adulthood in the context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. This was a joint research project conducted by: the School of Development Studies at the University of Natal, Durban; the Horizons Project; the Policy Research Division of the Population

Council; Focus on Young Adults; and MEASURE/Evaluation Project of Tulane University in New Orleans. It was a prospective study of the reproductive behaviour and sexual health of adolescents in KwaZulu-Natal as well as their education and employment experiences, family and environmental conditions, and other factors in their lives that may influence their sexual behaviour and choices. The study documented patterns and trends in the incidence and timing of key events during the adolescent's transition to adulthood, of which dropping out of school was one area on which data was collected. In addition, the study contributed to both designing and recommending policies and programs that will improve opportunities for adolescents – employment and life course - and may also contribute to changing their behaviour and choices.

Transition to Adulthood study consists of first and second waves conducted in 1999 and 2001 respectively. The study used a modified multi-stage cluster sample approach. A random selection of 120 enumeration areas (EAs) from a sampling frame of all EAs in the Durban Metropolitan and Mtunzini Magisterial Districts was used at the first stage. At the second stage, field supervisors divided EAs into approximately equal segments of a predetermined size. Information from both waves represents adolescents' aged 14-22 in wave 1 and 13-27 in wave 2. The survey also collected data on the households and communities of the adolescents. Exploration of some of the principal indicators from the survey data is based on focus groups and other qualitative approaches. Additional data was collected at baseline and follow-up from all schools in the study area regarding the teaching of the Life Skills Programme in those schools. The latter is not pertinent to this study. To ensure coverage of a variety of urban, transitional and rural regions within the province, two administrative areas within the province – the Durban Metropolitan and Mtunzini Magisterial Districts – were selected and their combined populations provide the sample for this study.

#### **3.4 The sample size and demographic characteristics of young people**

Data collected from the second wave of Transition study is used in this dissertation. This data was collected between September to December 2001 and April and May 2002. The second wave is a follow up study of Wave 1 and in it 4185 young men and women (ages 13-27) were sampled from 2447 households in Durban



Metropolitan and Mtunzini Magisterial Districts. Young people that never attended school (0.4 percent) have been eliminated during the analysis in this dissertation<sup>4</sup>.

Table 1 below show the demographic characteristics of young people in the dataset. Results suggest that 52.5 percent of young people in the data set are females while their male counterparts account for 47.5 percent of young people. In order to ascertain variations on the incidences of dropping out of school different age groups were constructed. Young people with ages 13-18 account for 55.8 percent of the sample while ages 19-24 and 25 and older account for 43.4 and .8 percent of young people respectively<sup>5</sup>. In contrast to the provinces' urban-rural distribution (45:55), a larger proportion of households included in the dataset were sampled in the urban areas as they for 67.4 percent as compared to 32.9 percent households sampled in the rural areas<sup>6</sup>. The racial distribution of young people in the dataset appears to be representative of the KwaZulu-Natal demographics; 76 percent blacks, 2 percent coloureds, 18 percent Indians and 4 percent whites. Ninety-eight percent of young people reported to have never married. Sampled young people that were married, cohabiting, or separated as well as widowed account for 2 percent of the sample of young men and women.

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<sup>4</sup> The exclusion of the 'never attended' school young men and women was made on the basis that they have never or and even likely to experience dropping out of school episodes. Yet this does not attempt to be blind to the fact that reasons for never attended school might be similar or close related to those cited by young people that dropped out of school in the study.

<sup>5</sup> Note that people with ages 13-18 are still expected to be still enrolled in school. Age 18 is the 'normal' age for leaving school.

<sup>6</sup> No explanation is given for the over-sampling of urban young people.



**Table 1. Demographic characteristics of young people**

| Characteristic                     | Young People<br>(N=4167) | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| <b>1. Sex</b>                      |                          |            |
| Males                              | 1979                     | 47.5       |
| Females                            | 2188                     | 52.5       |
| <b>2. Age</b>                      |                          |            |
| 13-18                              | 2325                     | 55.8       |
| 19-24                              | 1809                     | 43.4       |
| 25+                                | 33                       | .8         |
| <b>3. Residence</b>                |                          |            |
| Urban                              | 2807                     | 67.4       |
| Rural                              | 1360                     | 32.9       |
| <b>4. Race</b>                     |                          |            |
| Black                              | 3161                     | 75.9       |
| Coloured                           | 85                       | 2.0        |
| Indian                             | 753                      | 18.1       |
| White                              | 168                      | 4.0        |
| <b>5. Marital Status</b>           |                          |            |
| Ever married & cohabiting          | 83                       | 2          |
| Never married                      | 4084                     | 98         |
| <b>6. Birth mother still alive</b> |                          |            |
| Yes                                | 349                      | 8.4        |
| No                                 | 3818                     | 91.6       |
| <b>7. Birth father still alive</b> |                          |            |
| Yes                                | 949                      | 22.8       |
| No                                 | 3218                     | 77.2       |
| <b>8. School level</b>             |                          |            |
| Primary                            | 783                      | 18.8       |
| Secondary                          | 3384                     | 81.2       |

*Source: Transitions to Adulthood study, Wave 2*

### **3.5 Young People's education status: dropouts vs. the enrolled**

Figure 1 below shows the school attendance status of young people as reported in the second wave survey. Included are those who were, at the time of the study, enrolled in schools (64.1 percent), dropouts (35.5 percent) and those who never attended school (0.4 percent) of the sample<sup>7</sup>. 'Dropped out' is designated as the dependent variable for this analysis<sup>8</sup>. This variable has been redefined and coded as a dichotomous variable where "not dropped out" refers to those who were still enrolled in schools during the time of the study, and "dropped out" refers to those who have

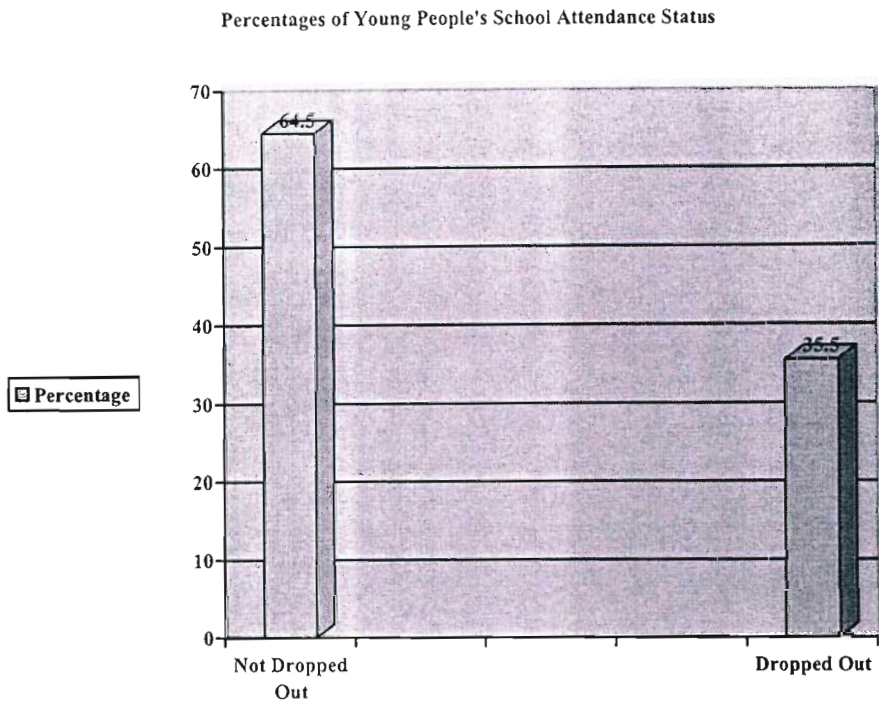
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<sup>7</sup> Further analysis in this dissertation excluded young adults that never enrolled in school.

<sup>8</sup> In a broader sense, a dependent variable is a variable affected by other variable(s). It is a variable that is either used to predict or explain on the basis of other variables.

left school before finishing, i.e. before completing their matric/Grade 12. Those who never attended school were excluded in the analysis.

**Figure 1: Percentages of Young Peoples’ School Attendance Status**



*Source: Transitions to Adulthood study, Wave 2*

**3.6 Methods of Analysis**

The statistical software package that was used to analyse data set was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). One of the key arguments made in this dissertation is that factors that contribute to dropping out of are associated with young people’s household economic status. An assumption is that those who drop out of school come from poor households. Using this assumption as a basis of analysis, household total monthly expenditure is used as an indicator of poverty. Statistical procedures of analysis such as frequencies and cross tabulations are used to test the hypothesis that poverty and dropping out of school are associated.

In addition to this, a logistic regression model is used to explore a possible relationship between dropping out of school (dependent variable) and independent variables about young people’ characteristics such as sex, age, race, marital status,

poverty status, school level, area of residence and whether birth parent was still alive during the time of the survey. The dependent variable is dropouts – coded as 0 if not dropped out and 1 if the adolescent dropped out of school before completing matric/Grade 12<sup>9</sup>. The analysis using the logistic regression focused on both significance ratio and the odds ratios. The former is used to determine the significance relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Odds ratios are used in looking at the extent to which probability of dropping out of school occurs to the probability that young people remained in school – do not drop out of school<sup>10</sup>.

### **3.7 Limitations of the data set**

Since information in the dataset is based on young men and women surveyed in some parts of KwaZulu-Natal, findings obtained from this chapter may not be generalisable to other research sites in the province and countrywide. As a result it may be difficult to determine whether the causal factors for dropping out of school are identical with those in other South Africa's provinces. For example, not all South African provinces are predominantly rural as KwaZulu-Natal. Contrary to this, causes and effects of dropping out of school vary with context.

A second limitation is that this study includes young men and women of ages between 13 and 27 years and thus does not allow this dissertation to look at the dropping out of school trends among children between ages 7 to 12. In addition a misrepresentation of primary schools (regarded as a compulsory phase by the South African Schools Act) in the dataset makes it difficult for this dissertation to show prevalence (to a large extent) of dropping out of school episodes at this school level<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> It is important to bear in mind that a binomial (or binary) regression is a form of regression which is used when the dependent variable is a dichotomy and the independent variables are of any type.

<sup>10</sup> The odd is the ratio of the probability that the event of interest occurs to the probability that it does not (the probability of the event divided by the probability of the non-event). This is often estimated by the ratio of the number of times that the event of interest occurs to the number of times that it does not (Bland and Altman, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> In contrast, this limitation offers a unique opportunity to look at a group other people would not be able to measure at all. Although young men and women at the primary level are significantly lower than in secondary school, it is interesting to see if adolescents exhibit similar or different dropping out of school behaviours and whether reasons provided are similar or different. If so, why?

Therefore results will support the assumption that the majority of young men and women and dropping out of school behaviour occurs at a secondary school level.

Lastly, the survey's household questionnaire does not have a question on the income of households. Hence it is not possible to use this indicator to measure poverty. The accurate measurement of expenditure can also be questioned. Questions on the households' monthly expenditure, coded as "the amount of money spent on food and non-food items" were included but their focus remains unclear. No specifications of items particularly 'non-food items' are made in the questionnaire<sup>12</sup>.

A further limitation of the questionnaire is that it does not allow for an itemised analysis of education costs. It is impossible, in cases where children are at school, to analyse the amount of money spent on school fees, transport of children to school, and textbooks and stationary either as individual variables or in relation to other indicators.

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<sup>12</sup> The expenditure data will be used as a very rough indication of the financial status of the households sampled in the Transitions to Adulthood study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Prevalence and characteristics of Dropouts**

Table 2 below shows variation according to the young adults' demographic characteristics and background indicators. It is important to bear in mind that the emphasis of this dissertation is among young men and women that were reported to have dropped out of school during the time of the survey. Demographic and background indicators include: age, sex; race; area of residence; marital status; whether the birth father or mother is still alive or not; and school level.

##### **i. Age**

Dropouts with ages 13–18 account for 22.4 percent of dropouts in the sample of dropouts. A larger proportion of dropouts were between ages 19–24 accounting for 75.5 percent of the dropouts, while 2.1 percent is accounted by dropouts who were aged 25 and older during the time of the survey.

##### **ii. Gender**

Results show that females account for a larger proportion of dropouts – 56.5 percent as compared to their male counterparts who account for 43.5 percent of dropouts in the sample.

##### **iii. Type of residence**

It will, however, be remembered that urban areas are over-sampled in the Transitions study. Comparisons according to the area of residence suggest that 65.3 percent of dropouts are from the urban areas, while their rural counterparts account for 34.7 percent of dropouts in the sample of dropouts.

##### **iv. Race**

A larger proportion of dropouts in the sample are black accounting for 75.8 percent. Dropouts from other racial groups such as Indians account for 19.7 percent, coloureds account for 2.4 percent, and white dropouts account for 2.2 percent of the sample of dropouts.

the time of the survey. Dropouts that reported their birth father no longer alive account for 73.7 percent while those who cited their birth mother no longer alive account for 89.6 percent of dropouts in the sample.

#### **vii School level breakdown**

In the beginning it has been pointed out that young men and women in the data set are concentrated at the secondary school level. Dropouts that reported to have dropped out of school while enrolled at secondary level account for 83.2 percent of dropouts. Dropping out of school incidences at the primary school level was reported by 16.8 percents of the sample of dropouts.

### **4.2 Reasons associated with dropping out of school**

In order to establish more clearly why some young men and women experience dropping out of school episodes, respondents were asked to give reason(s) for dropping out of school before finishing. Both young men and women that have dropped out of school cited a multitude of reasons for this. For analysis purposes a range of reasons have been combined into four categories<sup>13</sup>. A combination of these reasons was made according to factors that appear to relate and have impact upon young men and women in completing their education. Table 3 below suggests that reasons for dropping out vary from economic, socio-cultural, individual, as well as school-based factors.

It needs to be noted that single reasons for dropping out of school such as 'pregnant or had a baby' appear to overlap and also relate to other factors. Hence in this analysis 'pregnant or had a baby' has been included within the individual related factors cited for dropping out of school. This can also be true for responses such as 'poor performance' as socio-economic conditions appear to relate to this single reason. Nevertheless analysis of reasons cited for dropping out of school is made according to these four categories. It is important to point out that young men and women that cited 'matriculated' (they account for 35 percent of young men and

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<sup>13</sup> I grouped these single reasons into four different factors, i.e. socio-cultural, economic, individual, and school-based. Single reasons have been classified according to factors that appear to explain their impact.

women no longer enrolled in school) as a reason for no longer enrolled in school are eliminated in this analysis<sup>14</sup>.

**Table 3: Main reason no longer enrolled in school**

| <b>Social &amp; cultural</b>                 | <b>Economic</b>                              | <b>Individual</b>                          | <b>School-based</b>  |
|--|--|--|--|
| Domestic responsibility: <b>52%</b>          | Family could not pay school fees: <b>76%</b> | Mental and physical disability: <b>17%</b> | Inaccessibility of schools: <b>18%</b>                     |
| Got married: <b>12%</b>                      | Needed or wanted to work: <b>23%</b>         | Poor performance: <b>3%</b>                | Poor school quality: <b>31%</b>                            |
|  | Death of family member: <b>1%</b>            | Lack of interest: <b>25%</b>               | Could not redo matric: <b>6%</b>                           |
| Care for the sick family member: <b>20%</b>  |  | Not sure of what to study: <b>.2%</b>      | Acceptance to school denied: <b>18%</b>                    |
| Violence in community: <b>2%</b>             |  | Applied or applied too late: <b>.6%</b>    | Fighting, bullying, gossip in school: <b>18%</b>           |
| Uniform? against religious belief: <b>2%</b> |  | Got arrested: <b>.2%</b>                   | Classes not available due to teachers underpaid: <b>6%</b> |
| Parents decision to leave school: <b>6%</b>  |  | Lost certificate: <b>.6%</b>               | Course not available: <b>6%</b>                            |
| Had to study at the mosque: <b>2%</b>        |  | Expelled from school: <b>4%</b>            |  |
| Became a sangoma: <b>2%</b>                  |  | Completed grade/level: <b>12%</b>          |  |
|  |  | Pregnant or had a baby: <b>35%</b>         |  |
| <b>Total: 100%</b>                           | <b>Total: 100%</b>                           | <b>Total: 100%</b>                         | <b>Total: 100%</b>   |

*Source: Transitions to Adulthood study, Wave 2*

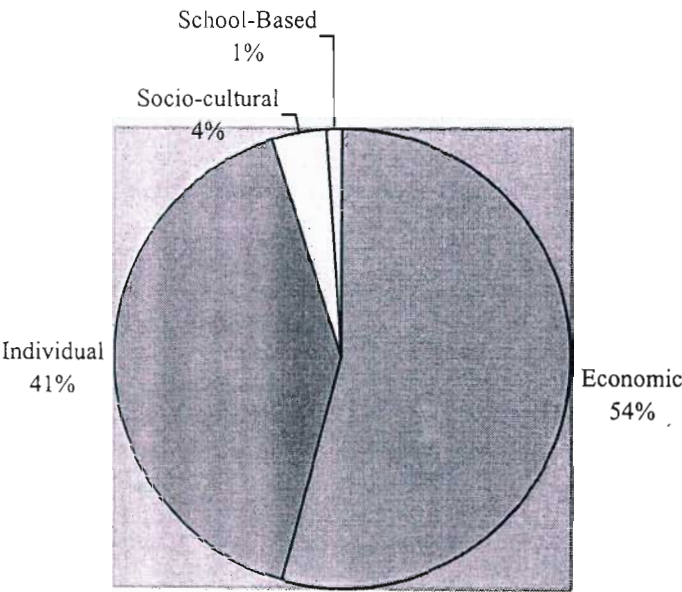
Figure 3 below indicate percentages of the combined categories that relate to reasons cited for dropping out of school. Results suggest that reasons given for dropping out of school vary widely. A larger proportion of young men and women that drop out of school before finishing (n = 1485) are affected by both economic and individual related reasons. Young men and women dropping out of school because of the former reason account for 54 percent of the sample of respondents who reported no longer enrolled in school. A larger proportion of this percentage is contributed by a single factor included in this category, i.e. ‘family could not pay school fees’. Excluding all other single variables included in the economic category, on its’ own ‘family could not pay school fees’ accounts for 76 percent of responses.

<sup>14</sup> Young men and women that have matriculated are not considered as dropouts in this dissertation.



Individual factors relating to dropping out of school account for 41 percent. Note that this category among others include ‘pregnant or had a child’, which accounts for 35 percent as a single reason cited for dropping out of school<sup>15</sup>. Socio-cultural factors account for 4 percent and school-based factors only account for a mere 2 percent of factors associated with dropping out of school before completing.

**Figure 4: Percentages for reasons for no longer enrolled in school**



Source: *Transitions to Adulthood study, Wave 2*

Having compared the factors associated with dropping out of school, I now move to investigate the extent to which dropping out of school is associated with the household economic status.

<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that no male young adult dropped out of school because of this single reason for no longer enrolled in school.



### **4.3 Poverty and schooling**

In investigating the impact of poverty on dropping out of school it remains important to assess the socio-economic status of all young men and women that dropped out of school before completing their education. As a result this dissertation distinguishes ‘poor’ from the ‘non-poor’ dropouts using the current poverty datum of South Africa. In distinguishing the ‘poor’ from the ‘non-poor’ a total monthly expenditure as proxy for measuring poverty will be employed.<sup>16</sup> This is rooted in the assumption that lack of income or low income levels affects many fundamental conditions underlying the households’ well being and standard of living<sup>17</sup>.

In order to distinguish ‘poor’ and ‘non-poor’ adolescents’ total monthly household expenditure was constructed in this analysis using both household food and non-food expenditures. These were calculated per capita level. Based on the poverty line used in the recent Statistics South Africa (2000) report on poverty, individuals living less than R250 per capita expenditure a month are defined as ‘poor’. As a result per capita poverty lines have been constructed, and statistical method executed to calculate per capita ‘poor’ dropouts. Results show that 67 percent of dropouts in the sample are ‘poor’. The ‘non-poor’ dropouts account for 33 percent young adults that dropped out of school in the sample - see Table 4 below. This suggests an impact of poverty as a broader reason associated with dropping out of school.

**Table 4. Proportions of dropouts according households’ economic status**

| <b>Economic Status</b> | <b>Dropouts (N=1485)</b> |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Non-Poor               | 491                      |
| Poor                   | 994                      |

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<sup>16</sup> Although not in itself a perfect measure, total monthly expenditure is widely regarded as a preferable measure of household material well being (Carter and May, 1999). That is, where income data is unreliable, absent or incomplete, expenditure provides an alternative measure of household welfare. In addition from a policy point of view, an analysis of food expenditure pattern, particularly in poor households, can lead to government designing subsidies for particular commodities, and also an elimination or reduction of indirect taxes on particular products.

<sup>17</sup> This can be evident in instances where household members are not fully employed or get employed from time to time. In addition, income generated from informal sector or through illegal means is most likely not to be disclosed by the respondent.

A further investigation looking at variations between both 'poor' and 'non-poor' dropouts according to their demographic characteristics is made – see Table 5 below. Results show that 59 percent of male dropouts are poor as compared to non-poor male dropouts who account for 41 percent of the male dropouts. A larger proportion of female dropouts – 73 percent – are poor and non-poor female counterparts account for 27 percent. Among dropouts with age 13-18 poor dropouts account for 71 percent, while their non-poor counterparts account for 29 percent. For age 19-24, poor dropouts account for 65 percent of young people of this age group while their non-poor counterparts account for 35 percent of dropouts. Poor dropouts that are 25 years and older account for a larger proportion of dropouts – 84 percents - when compared to their non-poor counterparts who account for 16 percent of dropouts who are 25 years and older.

Results on racial background among the poor and non-poor dropouts suggest that 84 percent of black dropouts are poor when compared to their black non-poor counterparts who account for 16 percent. This is contrary to all other racial groups as non-poor dropouts account for larger proportions when compared to their poor dropouts counterparts – see Table 5 below for coloured, Indian and white young men and women.

Urban poor young men and women account for 57 percent while their non-poor urban counterparts account for 43 percent of dropouts from the same are of residence. A larger proportion of rural dropouts are poor – 86 percent – when compared with the non-poor dropouts from the rural areas – 14 percent.

When looking at the marital status of dropouts among poor and non-poor dropouts, non-poor ever married and cohabiting dropouts account for 56 percent while their poor ever married and cohabiting dropouts account for 44 percent. Among never married dropouts a larger proportion are poor – accounting for 68 percent.

Poor dropouts that reported their mother alive account for 65 percent when compared to their non-poor dropouts of the same category – 35 percent. Similar trends are also evident among poor and non-poor dropouts whose fathers were no longer alive during the time of the survey – accounting for 63 percent and 37 percent respectively. A larger proportion of adolescents that dropped out of school enrolled at the primary school level are poor – 86 percents. This is also similar for adolescents that dropped out of school enrolled at the secondary level – 63 percent.

**Table 5: Demographic characteristics of Poor and Non-Poor Dropouts**

| Characteristic                     | Non-Poor Dropouts<br>(N=491) | Poor Dropouts<br>(N=994) |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>1. Sex</b>                      |                              |                          |
| Males                              | 262                          | 384                      |
| Females                            | 229                          | 610                      |
| <b>2. Age</b>                      |                              |                          |
| 13-18                              | 96                           | 237                      |
| 19-24                              | 390                          | 731                      |
| 25+                                | 5                            | 26                       |
| <b>2. Residence</b>                |                              |                          |
| Urban                              | 417                          | 553                      |
| Rural                              | 74                           | 441                      |
| <b>3. Race</b>                     |                              |                          |
| Black                              | 185                          | 940                      |
| Coloured                           | 31                           | 4                        |
| Indian                             | 242                          | 50                       |
| White                              | 33                           | 0                        |
| <b>4. Marital Status</b>           |                              |                          |
| Ever married & cohabiting          | 38                           | 30                       |
| Never married                      | 453                          | 964                      |
| <b>5. Birth mother still alive</b> |                              |                          |
| Yes                                | 32                           | 122                      |
| No                                 | 459                          | 872                      |
| <b>6. Birth father still alive</b> |                              |                          |
| Yes                                | 69.2                         | 84.8                     |
| No                                 | 30.8                         | 15.2                     |
| <b>7. School level</b>             |                              |                          |
| Primary                            | 34                           | 215                      |
| Secondary                          | 457                          | 779                      |

Source: *Transitions to Adulthood study, Wave 2*

#### **4.4 Regression Analysis: Determinants of school dropouts in KwaZulu-Natal**

Analysis of the data set also employed a logistic regression model to investigate factors that contribute to dropping out of school. It is important to bear in mind that the distribution of variables used for logistic regression is shown in Table 2. Results from a final logistic regression model suggest a significant relationship between dropping out of school and categories such as female young adults; black, coloured and Indian racial groups; rural residents, ever married young men and women; poor young adults; secondary school young men and women and those reported their mother still alive during the time of the survey<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> A step-wise regression model was followed in this dissertation, whereby independent variables were included and ranked according to both their significance

Results show that male adolescents are less likely to drop out of school than their female counterparts – see Table 6. There is a significant relationship with dropping out of school and being a female adolescent. May *et al* (1998) and Mturi and Nzimande (2002) noted that pregnancy among young females had major impact in interrupting and discontinuing their education. However this occurs in spite of the fact that teenage mothers in South Africa can now return to school once they given birth, (see Kaufman *et al* 2000). When looking at adolescents according to their racial background black, coloured and Indian adolescents are most likely to drop out of school than their white counterparts. This suggests a significant relationship with being white and remaining in school. Yet it is also important to bear in mind that the former apartheid government had segregated education by race, imposing inferior schooling on South Africa's other racial groups for many decades. Garson (2004) pointed out that the "liberation now, education later" stance or slogan taken during the years of the anti-apartheid struggle severely damaged the culture of learning and teaching in schools and universities, in particular among the Black young men and women. Instead of places of learning, schools became sites of protest. It is also important to note that when comparing black young adults, both Indian and coloured young adults are twice as much likely to drop out of school then their white counterparts.

Young people from urban areas are suggested to be less likely to drop out of school when compared to their rural counterparts. That is, there is a significant relationship with residing in rural areas and dropping out of school before completing. It is due to such discrepancies, among others that the Education Minister Kader Asmal has set up a seven-member ministerial committee that would look at specific needs of rural education. Some of the problems that have been identified so far include overcrowded classrooms, two schools sharing one premises, unregistered farm schooling, lack of formal infrastructure, and ineffective implementation of national policies (Naidoo 2004). It appears that a number of education policies, dealing with funding, infrastructure development, access or poverty, apply across the board, and do not deal with the specific needs of rural education. Young adults who reported to be married, widowed or separated together with those who are cohabiting are more likely

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ratio and the Odds ratio. When significance  $>.05$ , the independent variable is a candidate for removal from the model.

to drop out of school before finishing. There is a significant relationship between never married and remaining in school. This evidence was also suggested in the Transition to Adulthood Report where links between adolescent fertility and marriage were found to exist. “Childbearing and marriage are loosely linked; childbearing often precedes school completion and marriage by several years” (Hallman *et al* 2002). The household economic status of adolescents suggests that young people from poor household are most likely to drop out of school than their non-poor counterparts. Being poor have a significant relationship with dropping out of school. Children attending primary school are less likely to drop out of school when compared with those attending at a secondary school level. Finally results from the logistic regression model suggest that for young men and women who reported their mother as no longer alive are less likely to drop out of school. This suggests a significant relationship between birth mother no longer alive and remaining in school.

**Table 6. Logistic Regression Model of Adolescents Dropping out of School**

| Characteristic                  | Odds Ratio | Significance |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| <b>Sex</b>                      |            |              |
| Male                            | .829       | .005         |
| Females*                        |            |              |
| <b>Race</b>                     |            |              |
| Black                           | 1.834      | .005         |
| Coloured                        | 2.873      | .000         |
| Indian                          | 2.407      | .000         |
| White*                          |            |              |
| <b>Residence</b>                |            |              |
| Urban                           | .859       | .044         |
| Rural*                          |            |              |
| <b>Marital Status</b>           |            |              |
| Ever Married & Cohabiting       | 8.314      | .000         |
| Never Married*                  |            |              |
| <b>Poor</b>                     |            |              |
| Non-Poor                        | .770       | .004         |
| Poor*                           |            |              |
| <b>School Level</b>             |            |              |
| Primary                         | .775       | .004         |
| Secondary*                      |            |              |
| <b>Birth Mother Still Alive</b> |            |              |
| No                              | .683       | .001         |
| Yes*                            |            |              |
| <b>Constant</b>                 | .548       | .017         |

\*: Reference categories

Source: Transitions to Adulthood study, Wave 2

Further implications for these results and findings are discussed in the next chapter. A discussion of these findings will be made against the empirical findings from the reviewed literature (Chapter 2) and also against some of the recent evidence from newspaper articles.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

Contrary to many efforts by the new government in its commitment to widen access to educational opportunities and provision of a free education for all, the dropping out of school episodes remain as a major threat to the hardly achieved gains of the past nine years in the new South Africa. The repercussions of low levels of educational attainments have been shown to be fundamental throughout the African continent. Low levels of literacy in most African countries signify the countries' peripheral position when ranked with their developed compatriots using the Human Development Indexes, devised to measure development levels (Seers 1979). South Africa's relative wealth does not justify the existing disparities within the education systems and other sectors. Unlike most of its neighbouring countries, South Africa is an upper-middle-income country in respect to average per capita income. Yet a multitude of its citizens continue to be susceptible to abject poverty or are highly vulnerable to poverty (May, 1998).

Poverty is widely acknowledged as being among the most serious problems facing post-apartheid South Africa. In this respect South Africa is, to some extent identical to some developing countries. The prevalence of poverty in South Africa can be largely attributed to the manner in which wealth, resources and income have, and continue to be distributed in a skewed fashion. It is against this context that May (1998) noted that poverty and inequality in South Africa are closely related. For instance a very large proportion of its population suffer from abject poverty while the minority is privileged with extreme wealth. May predicts that, "[t]his situation is likely to affect not only the country's social and political stability, but also the development path it follows: countries with less equal distributions of income and wealth tend not to grow as rapidly as those with more equitable distributions" (May, 1998, quoted in [www.polity.org.za](http://www.polity.org.za)). It has been widely documented that poverty is concentrated in the African part of the population. Thus it can be surmised that

poverty has been intensifying in the black population particularly in the rural areas of residence<sup>19</sup>.

This chapter offers a comprehensive discussion of findings obtained in the analysis chapter. These findings will be discussed against some empirical evidence of the previous research on dropping out behaviour and factors that have been found to be detrimental to children's education (as offered in chapter 2). This discussion will be anchored around a broader impact of poverty in the education of children.

## **5.2 Summary of results**

Analysis of the dataset offered in this chapter suggests the following findings:

- Out of 4185 adolescents sampled from 2447 households in different parts of KwaZulu-Natal province, 52.6 percent are females and their male counterparts account for 47.4 percent of the adolescents in the sample. There is however a discrepancy in the sampling of rural and urban areas. Rural areas account for 32.9 percent while the urban areas were over-sampled and account for 67.1 percent of households in the sample. The race group distribution is 76 percent Blacks, 2 percent Coloureds, 18 percent Indians and 4 percent White adolescents in the study population. For all the adolescents in the sample, 2682 (64.1 percent) were still enrolled in school. These were distributed between primary schools – 18.7 percent – and secondary schools – 80.9 percent.
- Second is that 1485 (35.5 percent) adolescents are no longer enrolled in school – dropouts. Reasons cited for dropping out of school are associated with economic (54 percent), individual (41 percent), socio-cultural factors (4 percent), and reasons that relate to school-based factors (2 percent).
- Investigation of the dropouts' household economic status suggests that 67 percent of dropouts are poor. Non-poor adolescents account for 33 percent. These vary according to adolescents' demographic characteristics and background indicators.
- Finally a logistic regression model suggests that adolescents that are female, non-white, rural, ever married, poor, in secondary school level and among those whose birth mother is still alive are most likely to dropout of school.

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<sup>19</sup> Prevalence of poverty in the rural areas stems from biasness with respect to how development and distribution of resources such as schools, health facilities and infrastructure has occurred in favour of urban areas.



### **5.3 Schooling in KwaZulu-Natal**

As suggested by the findings from the 1993 SALDRU survey – see chapter 2, it is clear that the new South Africa's government inherited with it a system largely characterized by high incidences of unequal opportunities to education. With so much development in technology leading to a multiplication of resources, the new government would appear to have had an easy task in their attempts to address these past injustices and in curbing poverty. In particular, this should have applied to putting an end to the system of elitist education. In fact the South African Schools Act of 1996 was adopted amongst many policies for transforming South African education system. Yet to this present day, disparities and unequal access to education still exist.

Findings from this dissertation suggest a lack of universal education in KwaZulu-Natal. As mentioned above, dropping out of school occurs in KwaZulu-Natal regardless of some major transformations put in place in the past nine years of democracy. When looking at both the SALDRU 1993 findings and Transitions to Adulthood 2001 findings it is clear from this comparison that among others both individual and economic factors are significant in explaining reasons for dropping out<sup>20</sup>. But within each of these categories, economic factors have a major impact in the education of children. Note that this comparison assists us to look at how the proportions of reasons associated with dropping out of school have increased between 1993 and 2001<sup>21</sup>.

#### **5.3.1 Who are the school dropouts in KwaZulu-Natal?**

Findings from the data analysed in the previous chapter suggest that dropping out of school has not decreased substantially in spite of the governments 'commitment' to ensure equal access to education. Instead during the years 1994 to 2000 incidences of dropping out of school have occurred and accelerated at an unprecedented rate. Despite a relatively high level of adolescents who reported to be enrolled in schools (64.1 percent) – as already shown in chapter 3 - dropouts (35.5) on the other hand may increase if nothing is being done by the government to remedy

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<sup>20</sup> It is important to bear in mind that these comparisons are drawn between a national survey (SALDRU) and a study, which only includes two administrative areas within KwaZulu-Natal (Transitions to Adulthood in the context of AIDS: 2001).

<sup>21</sup> This assertion acknowledges my limited access to the SALDRU 1993 dataset for drawing such conclusions.

some of the problems that relate to factors leading to dropping out of school. The education minister Dr Kader Asmal, after the release of the 2002-matric results, expressed his concern over dropping out of school episodes countrywide. He voiced his concerns over a number of matric candidates enrolled for the Senior Certificate examination that failed to write their exams countrywide (Sowetan Sunday World, 2002). The newspaper reported that of the 670 636 full- and part-time candidates registered for the Senior Certificate nationally, only 443 821 actually wrote their final examinations. More than 227 000 did not write their final papers. Between 1999 and 2002 the number of candidates that wrote their final examination dropped. According to the newspaper reporter, "Asmal indicated that he felt schools discouraged candidates from writing the exams if they considered them to have little chance of success", (Sowetan Sunday World, 2002: 9). This is confirmed by findings of this dissertation which suggest a prevalence of dropouts among adolescents enrolled in secondary schools<sup>22</sup>.

Dropouts in the KwaZulu-Natal province vary according to their demographic characteristics and background indicators. Findings from Hunter (2000) and May and Hunter (2000) in their studies on adolescents in KwaZulu-Natal showed that episodes of dropping out are very high amongst females and black adolescents in the province. Even without taking into account the poverty levels of their households, findings of this dissertation suggest that female young adults in the province drop out of school more than their male counterparts. High incidences of dropouts among female young adults occur in spite of the fact that they account for high numbers of those still enrolled in schools in the study area.

In explaining high female dropouts Gachukia, (1992) in his study of teenage pregnancy - referred to earlier - argued that the increasing drop out rates for females in secondary schools amongst other reasons is exacerbated by absence of alternative forms of education or options for re-entry after childbirth. In addition to this, one can argue that the prevalence of dropping out of school among female adolescents may also be related to their life styles too. Even today, in some societies females do housework; cooking, taking care of younger or older siblings, generally helping their over-burdened mothers, and training for their future roles as wives and mothers. Such

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<sup>22</sup> No distinction is made in the analysis to ascertain the grade in which dropping out incidences occur.

roles may not only force them out of school but have major impact on their performance in school. This is also confirmed by the extent to which ever married adolescents dropout of school more than their never married counterparts<sup>23</sup>.

As we have seen from both Transitions and SALDRU datasets racial difference of adolescents also suggests differences in the probability of dropping out of school. Black adolescents have a higher probability to leave school prematurely as compared to all other race groups. Yet one need to bear in mind that the surprising results obtained from the logistic regression suggest that both coloured and Indian adolescents are twice as much likely to drop out of school than black adolescents.

In spite of the over sampling of urban areas in the dataset, evidence suggests that adolescents from the rural areas are most likely to drop out of school. This concurs with evidence from some of the previous studies, which documented social disparities such as dropping out of school and those relating to poverty to be a common behaviour in rural areas (see Carter and May, 1999; Fataar, 1997; Hunter 2002). In this regard one can argue that such findings may also be exacerbated by a general lack of schools and distance to available few schools. Hence dropping out of is prevalent among adolescents from rural areas.

Converse to the important role of the birth parent, in particular mothers in financing and prioritising their children's education as suggested by Lloyd and Gage-Brandon (1994) is not evident from this dissertation. Findings from this dissertation suggests that adolescents that reported their birth mother as no longer alive are most likely to remain in school than adolescents whose birth mothers were still during the time of the survey<sup>24</sup>.

Variations exist at the level of school – secondary and primary school level. Analysis of the data set employed in this dissertation suggests that there are high incidences of dropping out among the adolescents enrolled at secondary school level. Prevalence of dropouts among adolescents enrolled in secondary schools may be related to the provisions made in the Section 3 of the 1996 SASA imposes a

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<sup>23</sup> No distinction is made to determine the demographic characteristics (such as gender and race) of the ever married dropouts.

<sup>24</sup> It is important to note that these findings do not take not that adolescents who reported their birth mother no longer alive may be leaving with the primary care givers either as relatives or foster parent, who value their education.

compulsory attendance of learners at school between ages of seven and fifteen (or the completion of grade 9). For the Act this is the compulsory or General Education phase. In addition the Act stipulate that “[e]very provincial Member of the Executive Council for Education (MEC) is required to provide sufficient school places for every child in the compulsory attendance bracket... [and] If this cannot be done because of lack of capacity, the MEC must take steps to remedy the lack as soon as possible” (National Norms and Standard for School Funding, 1998: 12). This leaves the secondary school children vulnerable to households’ economic conditions especially in cases where they will not be able to afford costs associated with schooling, such as paying school fees<sup>25</sup>.

#### **5.4 Implications for poverty alleviation**

Apart from the previous empirical evidence pointing to poverty as a source leading to the inability of parents to afford school fees, findings from this paper show a significant relationship between dropouts and poverty in the household, (see Mturi and Nzimande, 2002; Segoula *et al*, 2002, May, 2000). However this finding in particular confirms the hypothesis developed in the paper, that: people who drop out of school tend to come from poor households. Poor adolescents that drop out of school account for 67 percent while non-poor dropouts account for 33 percent of adolescents that drop out of school. Obviously due to the poor economic conditions coupled with high levels of unemployment in the province, many parents are finding it extremely hard or impossible to pay school fees. But what is interesting from the evidence gathered in this paper is that the prevalence of poverty in the province is uneven. Many studies have shown this fact. Even in this paper no white adolescent falls in the poor bracket. As a result none of the white adolescent drops out because of economic related factors. This is also evident even among Indian and coloured adolescents who largely drop out of school due to individual and social related factors. That is, it is the historically disadvantaged black adolescents who are victimised and discriminated due to their inability to pay school fees, yet are the most poor population group. It is against the significant relationship between dropping out of school and being poor – as suggested in the logistic regression analysis – that this

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<sup>25</sup> This assertion acknowledges that 13 years is the ‘normal’ age for people to begin their secondary school level. Hence the compulsory phase is primary school level according to the Act.

dissertation puts emphasis on the economic reasons associated with dropping economic as a major contributor. However this does not attempt to overlook the impact of factors such as female; black, coloured and Indian racial backgrounds; rural; never married; secondary school level; and still having a birth mother alive as contributing to dropping out of school. Instead, this dissertation sees poverty as an 'unwarranted' factor associated with dropping out of school. Lack of a universal education is a source of this problem. In addition to this, poverty may be an underlying factor even for factors that have a significant relationship with dropping out school. That is, unequal access and opportunities for completing school among female adolescents; black, Indian and coloured adolescents; rural adolescents; ever married adolescents; adolescents at secondary school level together with those having their birth mother alive can best explain dropping out of school episodes among these categories.

It needs to be remembered that preliminary findings have suggested that 'family could not pay school fees, too expensive' account for 76 percent as a single economic related factor forcing adolescents to dropout of school in KwaZulu-Natal. Sogoula *et al* (2002) show this to be an area of increasing concern, with 54 percent of children in their study having stopped schooling, and ascribing the reason to a lack of money to pay for school fees and uniforms. It is noted that families in their study were not able to sustain expenditure beyond that required for food items and that requirements for additional expenditure on annual school fees and uniform costs comes at a considerable social cost and adds to existing household poverty.

Evidence of school dropouts due to inability to afford school fees, challenges the provisions outlined in the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (1998: 16) that "no learner can be denied admission, or otherwise discriminated against, on grounds of the parent's inability or failure to pay fees".

In spite of this assurance the latest official announcement from the Department of Education and Culture in response to the parents' querying whether their children will be accepted at school despite the non-payment of school fees said, "The department has made it clear that it is not responsible for funding schools and it is the responsibility of school governing body to take charge of the financial affairs of the schools ... [and the department claims to be] against the law for a child not to be accepted at a school due to the non-payment of school fees" (*Southern Star*: 20

January, 2003: 2). Instead the government suggest that the SGB should come up “with an amicable plan for the parents to make arrangements to pay the fees in instalments” (Veerasamy reports in *Southern Star*: January 20, 2003). In the same article it is reported that some schools withheld last years’ learners progress reports because their parents have not paid school fees. It is against such ambiguous statements that the government appear to be shifting the responsibility to the poor people to fund the education of their children. There seem to be no option for the unemployed other than to remove their children from schools.

In addition to this, the Department of Education chief executive Professor Charles Dlamini confirmed in the Daily News that he had received several complaints about certain schools that use the payment of school fees to exclude learners. He made it clear that school principals should realise it was the constitutional right of every child to have access to basic education. He was quoted as saying:

*Some schools are demanding the full, upfront payment of fees which is absolutely unreasonable and which I cannot accept ...These are tactics being used to keep certain people out, (Daily News, January, 22, 2003: 1).*

Clearly there seems to be a lack of cooperation from the Department of Education and Culture officials and the school authorities. There’s an obvious contrast to the above statement from which the government is now claiming not to have any role in the funding of public schools. From a close analysis of the schools’ Act 1996, the government commits itself in funding all public schools. As noted in Chapter 3 the basic principles of state funding of public schools derive from the constitutional guarantee of equality and recognition of the right of redress. The Act provides that:

*The state must fund public schools from public revenue on an equitable basis in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to education and the redress of past inequalities in educational provision (section 34(1)).*

Thus it remains unclear whether the department is not keeping its’ promise for funding schools or the school authorities lack the capacity in implement provisions as articulated in the policy documents from the department of education. But even though acts of discriminating against and victimizing learners, whose parents are not able to afford school fees, are clearly measures not sanctioned by the government or the ministry of education. It is very critical to seek answers on this matter, because



according to SASA special arrangements should be made with low-income parents to be partially or fully exempted from paying school fees. In addition to this the ministry of education, proposes that fully exempted parents should be encouraged to offer their physical labour in meeting some of the school needs. These can vary from cleaning, administration work as well as security services to the school concerned.

In addition to findings of this dissertation it needs to be pointed out that access to schools in KZN is still minimal in some contexts. This is aggravated by a general lack of infrastructure and sufficient school space to accommodate more learners. Corroborating this, recent evidence comes from Bisetty of the Daily News (2003), on the re-opening day of schools in KwaZulu-Natal. She reported that, “[t]he first day scramble for a place at KwaZulu-Natal schools today left some pupils and parents worried and confused when they were turned by school authorities” (*Daily News*, January 22, 2003: 1). Some of the problems at some schools relate to vandalism aggravated by a general lack of security facilities and security personnel at most of the schools in the province. Amongst many incidences of vandalism of classrooms, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teachers and a shortage and absence of stationary characterized the first school day in many regions in the province. These factors are likely to economically strain poor households if children are sent to distant schools and also if families have to provide stationary for their children.

Inaccessibility to schools appears to be also evident in other South Africa’s provinces as well. Fed up with the exclusion of their children from public schools, *Mail and Guardian* (February 2, 2003) reported that residents of Khayelitsha, Western Cape, have set up their own school. People’s Power Secondary School is one of the attempts by people to ensure an education for citizens that the state is currently not providing. According to the *Mail and Guardian* (February 22, 2003) the school has registered 1,800 learners between January and February. A Khayelitsha resident and member of the Western Cape-based Anti-Eviction Campaign, which according to the article is assisting residents in setting up and running the school, asserted that:

*All the students have been excluded from other schools on grounds concerning school fees, failure last year, or age ...Education is a right: no one should be penalised because they are poor. We’re not prepared to be victims any longer. The government must adhere to the demands of our community with immediate effect (Mail and Guardian, 20003: 8).*

## **5.5 Conclusions and Recommendations**

Apart from the calls from the global institutions such as UNESCO and Oxfam and in accordance with the aspirations of the oppressed people of South Africa enshrined in the Freedom Charter of 1955, evidence from the analysis undertaken in this dissertation identifies the magnitude of the need for an immediate response and a solution for the dropping out of school phenomena. Large numbers of learners “dropping out of school” is not necessarily a symptom of a failure at school. It is a symptom of a community with problems. It requires an immediate response by the whole community together with the government. Poverty is a major contributor to the culture of dropping out of school. This is suggested by the fact that dropping out of school incidences in the KwaZulu-Natal province are common amongst females, non-white young adults, rural young adults, young men and women from poor households, young adults enrolled in secondary school and among young people that reported birth mother alive. Episodes of this phenomenon have continued to occur in an unprecedented fashion in spite of the new governments’ promises and efforts to provide a FREE AND EQUAL EDUCATION FOR ALL. Children from poor households are discriminated against because poverty makes it extremely difficult for them to afford school fees.

On the other hand this dissertation commends the governments’ efforts to provide or move towards a comprehensive social security system. Child Support Grant as well as Basic Income Grant – if provided – are classic examples of these measures. Nevertheless such exercises will be a drop in the ocean if the government does not invest in the education of the coming generation. Investment in human capital, particularly in education, is means to alleviate poverty. Rather than directly expanding peoples’ income and wealth, enlarging people’s choices and making them as both means and end is essential. The human capital approach to poverty alleviation “recognises education primarily not as an instrument or means of development, but as poverty alleviation itself, while lack of the same constitutes not just a cause of poverty, but poverty itself. Educational deprivation or poverty of education becomes an integral part of human poverty” (Tilak, 2002: 195). It is in this light that this paper makes the following recommendations<sup>26</sup>:

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<sup>26</sup> Note that these recommendations calls for the government to recommit itself to funding education. Yet no budgetary considerations are offered in this dissertation.



#### At the Policy level'

- Education opportunities should be widened to ensure that females, rural young men and women, black, coloured and Indian young adults and especially those from the poor households complete their education.
- The Ministry of Education and Training should take serious measures against those who victimise children who are unable to pay their school fees because of poverty by excluding them from schools. During the time of this study there was an emerging myth that the Minister of Education had taken a serious stance on this matter. A toll-free number was said to exist to report all the school authorities that deprive children of their fundamental right, on the basis of their economic status<sup>27</sup>.
- The new government should recommit itself in funding all public schools – both primary and secondary - through public revenues.

#### Governments' Intervention Programmes

- When funding schools special attention should be given to historically disadvantaged public schools. That is, more funds and resources should be directed to schools in poor communities<sup>28</sup>.
- It should be the responsibility of the Department of Education to equip the SGBs from poor communities with administrative aid and fundraising skills. In addition SGBs should be given the capacity to understand and adhere to the policies from the department, including capacity building.

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<sup>27</sup> It will be interesting to find if those who have been denied access to schools are aware and have made use of such facilities. It remained difficult for this dissertation to gather such information.

<sup>28</sup> This does not attempt to create another inequality. Instead it considers that most learners that drop out of school are largely among the historically disadvantaged public schools. More often than not, these schools are less funded by the government. As a result some schools charge school fees in order to augment the limited funds and scarce resources.

- Finally, state subsidies should be given to poor children to afford school uniforms, while textbooks as well as stationary should remain the states' provision.

For further research,

- From representative sample of urban-rural areas, qualitative research methods – in-depth interviews and focus groups - should be employed to supplement findings of this research. Primary subjects of this research should include the school authorities, parents, educators as well as dropouts and the non-dropouts.
- Data on a distribution of children at both secondary and primary school should be used to compare episodes of dropping out at these school levels. This will be able to demonstrate age differences among dropouts.
- A decrease of dropping out incidences needs to be investigated especially in reference to the Ministers' stance on taking serious action against school authorities that denies access to children.
- It is important to point further research need to be expanded to other provinces in South Africa.

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